



DACORUM AND CHILTERN
POTTERS GUILD

Issue 57 Spring 2026
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In this issue:

**Demos by Katherine Kingdon
and Lesley Farrell
POD 2026
with John Higgins,
Toni de Jesus and
Paul Young**



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Cover pictures:

Top Left: Katherine Kingdon

Top Right: Lesley Farrell

Bottom Left: Toni de Jesus

Bottom Right: Paul Young



A reminder to all members, if you
haven't yet, it's time to book your table
for Kingsbury Exhibition.

Contact Jill Baxter.

jillmbaxter82@gmail.com



Contents

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 4. Socials and Big Build | 21 POD26 - John Higgins |
| 5. Friday Meetings / New Members | 22 Toni de Jesus |
| 6 Exploring Crystalline Glazes | 25 Paul Young |
| 6 Terrific Tuesdays at COAM | 28 St Albans Market |
| 8 Other Events / Firing dates | 29 London Potters 40th |
| 9 Anthony Dix workshop | 29 Glaze Inspiration |
| 11 COAM Wood kiln report | 30 Luminous Clay |
| 14 Soda firing at COAM | 30 Throwing Clay |
| 16 Katherine Kingdon | 31 Gabriel |
| 18 Lesley Farrell | Newfield |



Notes from the Chair

Jackie Harrop



I am still buzzing from the excitement of last weekend's POD with inspiring and fascinating inputs from John Higgins, Toni de Jesus and Paul Young; three amazing potters whose styles are so different yet incredibly interesting to listen to and watch.

It felt great to have such a terrific team of helpers with many newer members stepping up to share responsibility. The end of this month sees another busy weekend for the firing teams at COAM with a soda firing planned and the start of digging for a pit firing later in the year. Terrific Tuesdays have started again during the Easter holiday and more helpers for the summer would be welcomed.

You will have seen the questionnaire to members and I hope you have contributed so that the committee can check we are meeting your aspirations on our reset day in May.

It's very reassuring to note that membership is steadily rising and I hope to meet more of the new members at the Friday meetings in Kings Langley.

We have a full diary of demonstrators through to July 2027 !

St Albans BID have invited us to join them at the Alban festival on 20th June so get your togas on for a Roman celebration as we create a Roman amphitheatre and temple with help from the public. Volunteers welcome, just email me at Chair@dcp.org.uk

Take up for the Kingsbury exhibition from Sept 11-13 has been phenomenal and we are already full with our local radio station Mix FM joining us all day on Saturday 12th. Entries for the members' competition with a theme of SEASONS will be on display so get busy making if you would like to enter – there are monetary prizes. See Tim for details.

A date for your diaries; the summer picnic again at COAM is on 1st August with music and hopefully a nice summer evening to look forward to.

Don't miss out, looking forward to you joining us at these events.

Best wishes

Jackie



Editorial Spring 2026

Ros McGuirk



When we started planning this issue we were expecting only a modest amount of copy, with only two Friday nights to review and maybe a couple of firings. So we decided to wait till after our Open Day and include that to fill it out. Since then copy has been pouring in and we now have a super sized edition. I hope

you find the space in your busy lives to read and enjoy it. With many thanks to all you lovely potters who have sent in accounts of your projects, exhibitions, book reviews et al, please keep on scribbling!



Guild Socials

January to May 2026 10.30 - 12.30

All Socials will start at 10.30am and finish at 12.30pm apart from the DCPG Summer Social - timings will be confirmed nearer to the date.

Wednesday, April 15: Sunnyside Trust Cafe, Hemel Hempstead HP3 9BY

Monday, May 11: The Cafe in the Park, Rickmansworth Aquadrome WD3 1NB

Thursday, June 25: Studio session with Isabel Colomar. The session includes a talk on Terra Sigillata and a practical

workshop on applying the terra Sigillata to your own pot. Further details will be provided later.

Wednesday, July 22: Visit to the Cookham Abbey Archaeology Dig with resident artist Emma Przygodzka. Further details and timings will be provided later.

Saturday, August 1: Summer Party at the Chiltern Open Air Museum with live music HP8 4AB Further details and timings will be provided later.



The Big Build

On Sat 20th June St Albans will be celebrating all things Roman. While the City Guides are giving tours of the Roman remains we will be building an amphitheatre and temple in the town. Our builds are always popular and all

are welcome to join in the fun.

Volunteers are needed beforehand to construct the formers and prep the clay. Details tba.

NB Look out for centurians!



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.

8th May : John Wheeldon.

Well known for his knowledge and skill as a raku potter producing wonderful copper colours and metallic lustres. He also enjoys making table ware decorated using roulettes and stamps and enhanced by his own glazes.

www.johnwheeldonceramics.co.uk

Sat 10th Oct at 9.30am : Russell Collins.

A welcome return for one of the last of the great production throwers and an

unmissable treat for us. He trained many potters and filled countless hotels and pubs with well made earthenware.

Form, function and glazes match perfectly. Now retired he is enjoying a stoneware renaissance.

This will be preceded by the AGM.

13th Nov : Chris Keenan.

He gave up acting for ceramics, trained with Edmund de Waal, and now makes beautiful pots with Limoges porcelain by throwing and altering. Based in Camberwell where he has a studio.

www.chriskeenanco.uk

11th Dec : Matthew Blakely.

Matthew trained at art school in Australia and returned to live near Cambridge as a fully fledged porcelain craftsman. Since then he has developed an interest in a more challenging area - searching out geological sources for glazes. His pots have changed dramatically as a result, taking on the characteristics of the rocks themselves. He also teaches and runs workshops.

<https://matthewblakely.co.uk/>



New Members

A big welcome back for **Kate Radford** who has been running her own pottery business for over 20 years. Based at Kensworth, Beds, she now has a sparkling new studio, spacious and well equipped, where she also runs her popular classes.

See kateradfordpottery.co.uk

A warm welcome to new member

Jonny Oxley from Hertford who is one of Pat Joyce's students and is keen to learn even more.

Also to **Francesca Silverton** from Radlett, and to **Rachel Goldsmith** from Watford who is learning at West Herts College and loving every minute.

Most recently joined are **Fiona Johnson** from Berkhamsted, **Ross Macdonald**



New Members

from St Albans who started at evening class at UH taught by Ewa Wawrzyniak. Since then he has built up a large collection of unfired pots which he is gradually glazing and then using the firing service offered by Fiona Booy from St Albans Pottery.

Also **Alex Smith** from Pinner,

Buckley from Wheathampsted, **Stuart Ricketts** also from St Albans, has returned to throwing after a 45 year gap, and finally a warm welcome back to **Elizabeth Hedges** from Maidenhead whose mum was a potter, too!

Congratulations to all. We are looking forward to meeting you soon.



Exploring Crystalline Glazes by Diane Creber Jacki Harrop

Whether crystalline glazes are your thing or not, this book is an excellent source of extremely detailed information which might tempt you to explore this phenomenon and play with the alchemy of crystal formation in the magma of a molten glaze. It covers the history of the technique whereby natural crystals seeded in a molten glaze were first viewed as impurities, then through experimentation beautiful crystalline glazes were evolved, mimicking the geology of geodes and marble, usually on porcelain clays.

By controlling and managing the temperature, pressure, and with careful timing potters have been able to achieve the spectacular crystal growth in more predictable ways by “seeding” using crystal enhancers, and managing the viscosity.

The book has lots of examples and a wealth of detailed technical information including glaze formulae, information on kilns, pyrometers, and firing programmes. The photographs are truly amazing and its publication date is 14th May.



Terrific Tuesdays Judi Tribe

HANDS ON CLAY at Chiltern Open Air Museum, Chalfont St Giles HP8 4AB

Can you help

on Tuesday May 26th for the half term Terrific Tuesday and during the Summer holidays ? 10.00am - 4.00pm

COAM clay activity themes are

May 26th - Nature

July 28th - Wood

August 4th - Fire

August 11th Earth

August 18th - Metal

August 25th - Water

Our Hands On Clay activities are in the beautiful C16th Northolt Barn where there lots of tables and benches for the children and families to make their wonderful and imaginative clay models.



You don't need to come for the whole day. We especially need help during the morning from 10.00am until lunchtime as this is when it seems to be really busy. You will need to bring lunch if you can

stay longer. There is also the Museum's cafe at the Village Green.

If you are available could you please contact Judi via email juditribe0@gmail.com (0 is a zero)



Images Wanted

With over 150 members we produce an enormous variety of work between us and in future the newsletter will have a gallery section, for members only.

Whether you are just starting out on your clay journey or have years of experience behind you, this is a great opportunity to put something on show without the trouble of making a whole body of work or paying a fee!

Please, everyone, choose your 2 most favourite pieces, take a good photo of each and send both images in jpg or pdf

format to David Evans at

evansdjal@aol.com

NB. In a good photo the image should fill most of the space. You do not need to frame the image but it should have a plain and muted background such as a large piece of plain paper.

Use good but diffuse light. Direct light causes glare on glossy glazes and strong contrasts are distracting, whereas soft shadows may help give depth to the image.

Thank you



Other Events

30th April - 4th May. Craft in Focus. RHS Gardens Wisley, Woking, GU23 6QB. Entry free to RHS members. Others variable. See

www.craftinfocus.com/next-fair/rhs-wisley-spring-2026

Thurs 7th – Sun 11th May. Living Crafts at Hatfield House, AL9 5NG. The 50th anniversary of the largest craft show in the SE set in lovely grounds. www.livingcrafts.co.uk

Fri 8th – Sun 11th May. Ceramic Art London. The main CPA show of the year. Admission £21, 3 day ticket £50 and under 16's free. Olympia West, Hammersmith Rd, W14 8UX. www.tickets.ceramicartlondon

22nd – 24th May. Potfest SE. Glynde Place, Glynde, Lewes, BN8 6SX. www.potfest.co.uk

5th - 7th June. Spring Potfest in the Pens. Skirsgill Auction Mart, Penrith, Cumbria, CA11 0DN. 10am – 4.30pm. Adults £5, Accompanied under 16's free.

12th - 14th June. Potfest Scotland. Scone Palace. Perth, PH2 6BD

19th - 21st June. Potfest by the Lake. Compton Verney, Warks, CV35 9HJ

3 - 5th July. Potfest South West. Shaftesbury. Turnpike Showground, SP7 9PL.

10 - 12th July. Celebrating Ceramics. Waterperry Gardens, nr Wheatley, OX33 1LA. Tickets include entry to 'Desire Jewellery and Silversmithing', £16 online. www.celebratingceramics.co.uk

24th - 26th July. Potfest in the Park. Hutton-in-the-Forest. Penrith, CA11 9TJ

7 - 9th Aug. Potfest Suffolk. Haughley Park. Stowmarket, IP14 3JY

28 - 31st Aug. Craft in Focus. RHS Gardens Hyde Hall, Chelmsford, CM3 8ET. www.craftinfocus.com/next-fair/rhs-hyde-hall-2026

2 - 4th Oct. Ceramics in the City. Museum of the Home, 136 Kingsland Rd, London E2 8EA. 10am – 5pm. Free.

23rd - 25th Oct. Autumn Potfest in the Pens. Penrith.

Potential COAM Firing dates 2026

As always these are weather dependent and will only happen when there is support from the leaders and participants.

April 25th/26th
May 16th/17th
June 13th/14th
July 11th/12th
Aug 15th/16th

Sept 19th/20th
Oct 17th/18th
Nov 14th/15th
Dec 12th/13th

As always, dates are subject to change according to circumstances



Soda Workshop with Anthony Dix Lyndsey Miles

Anthony's first soda kiln was built inside the shell of an old electric kiln, using reclaimed bricks and a burner adapted from a raku kiln. This small kiln (around eight cubic feet) served him until 2019, when it was replaced with a larger version incorporating reused and new materials.

His surface development evolved through adapting existing salt and soda recipes to create a palette suited to his forms. Early experiments revealed challenges with internal glazes reacting unpredictably with slips and soda vapour, leaving unwanted edges.



Dix's distinctive surfaces result not from entirely original recipes but from his firing approach — particularly the use of a relatively small kiln and a generous soda application. His current



12-cubic-foot propane-fired kiln operates with two burners. Work is bisque-fired, coated with a thin sprayed slip, and fired for approximately 12 hours. Soda is introduced for about one hour at 1260–1270°C, using a solution made from two kilograms of soda crystals dissolved in three litres of water. The kiln atmosphere is in light reduction.

He primarily uses particular Potclays bodies, which comfortably withstand temperatures above 1300°C. His external blue surface — known as Number 5 — is based on a Rosemary Cochrane slip (see right).

Across decades of experimentation, Dix has refined a focused palette of surfaces, shaped as much by kiln scale and firing method as by the recipes themselves.



Below are the recipes he recommended at his talk:

INTERNAL GLAZE (WALTER KEELER)

Cornish stone 70

Wollastonite 30

Red iron oxide 8

BASE GLAZE TO ADD STAINS TO RUTHANNE TUDBALL)

AT ball clay 33

Porcelain clay 33

Soda feldspar .. 33



Wood Firing at the Chiltern Open Air Museum with the DCPG Lyndsey Miles





For the past couple of years we have been wood firing in our brick built kiln at COAM.

Through very early Sunday morning starts, cold, wet winters, shifting winds, and unpredictable weather, the kiln has been lit and the team has shown up.

It takes a dedicated group of firers to make this happen. From stacking and stoking to recording data and cleaning down, it is a committed and collaborative effort every single time.

A constant support is David Evans; arriving with oodles of recycled wood and apparently living in underground tunnels at COAM in order to build the space and welcome members safely. A long-running joke, but behind it lies genuine dedication and countless hours of hard work creating a safe and functional firing site.

He also brings a wealth of knowledge to each firing, from bird conversations and identifications of calls, discussions about habitats, education on local wildlife, flora and, during late stoking shifts, guiding us through the sounds of owls calling in the dark. Thank you for all you do David and for all that you are.

The kiln site is not just about ceramics; it is about awareness of the environment we work within and sharing with each other. A recent firing had a BBQ with each member bringing offerings and delicious recipes were exchanged. Big thanks go to Dave Burt, who cooked for us all.

(A frequent guest at the site is the “s’more”, often flanked by chocolate biscuits!)

Our practice is rooted not only in kiln



firing, but in a wider culture of communal making and shared experience. It is about collective learning, mutual support, and creativity as a connected community.

The Firing Process

Shelf space and loading plans are paramount. Careful stacking ensures good airflow and even heat through the kiln. When planned well, this reduces cold spots, improves glaze results, and produces more consistent firings overall.

The firing schedule is influenced by the weather, both leading up to and during the firing. Wind speed and direction, air temperature, and prior damp conditions all affect how the kiln behaves. Adjustments are made accordingly throughout the process.





Every firing is carefully logged. We record temperatures, timings, weather conditions, and observations. A graph is drawn to show the temperature climb visually, allowing comparison between firings and encouraging feedback and shared learning. Continuous improvement is central to what we do.

Health and Safety is paramount. Policies are in place. Sign-in sheets are completed for every firing and procedures are followed carefully. Payments for work fired are organised through the Guild account (thanks to Laura and Fran) and are based on the amount of work placed in the kiln.

In Jan 2026, we installed a new set of shelves (thank you, Tim for ordering) which will further improve efficiency and flow within the kiln. We are also equipped with new “bullet-proof” weatherproof notebooks (thank you, Nicole), ensuring that rain or shine, our records continue uninterrupted.



Community, Learning & Opportunity

We are incredibly fortunate and genuinely blessed to be offered space at COAM to build and fire monthly. It is a rare opportunity, and one that very few guilds are able to offer at such a supportive cost.

In return, we provide mini workshops and public sessions at the museum, including Terrific Tuesdays which have been organised for over 4 years by Judi - thank you Judi - but now we are in need of session leaders for this. Please do get in touch if you can help to support this. It is important to remember that our kiln site exists as part of this shared exchange.

Public education is a valued part of the experience. Visitors to COAM frequently stop to ask questions about the kiln and our work, creating opportunities to share knowledge about wood firing and ceramics more broadly.

Skills and knowledge sharing within the Guild are equally important. Glazes are offered and advice generously provided by Amanda, who works tirelessly to support members in this area (thank you Amanda).

The kiln site has also inspired my own extensive personal experimentation with wood ash glazes and ongoing research into surface development and forged clay.

This is truly a whole-Guild effort.



Future Learning

Into 2026, having made extensive notes at the ICF sustainable symposium and worked on my own practice around sustainability development, I'm keen to promote this at the site with more 'green' once firing and further lower temperature experiments. The plan is to continue to fire with all recycled wood.

Join Us

We love to welcome members to the site (even if you just want to see what's going on - you don't have to fire), but for those interested in experimental practices and wood firing, it's a great opportunity to try things and experiment.

If you have questions about access, do get in touch.

Please express interest to - lmiles514@icloud.com to join and/or link up to the WhatsApp groups for updates and firing notifications.

If you cannot attend a firing, there will be a DCPG table at Kingsbury Barn in September showcasing work from the COAM kiln site; do come along and take

a look at what has been achieved over the past couple of years.

Month after month, whatever the weather, the kiln continues to burn — powered by teamwork, shared learning, and a real passion for wood firing.

Hope to see you at a firing soon.

Lyndsey

Haiku By Nicole

Soda wood raku
Glazed with my community
Inspires my learning.

Nuka Glaze Recipe

With thanks to Keith who got it from spinningpots.com

28% Potassium feldspar

18.6% Dry wood ash

16.8% Flint

11.3% Whiting

8.4% Fero frit 3134 (K used Bath Potters Standard borax frit)

5.6% Bone Ash

5.6% Bentonite

The body was reclaimed buff and the firing went to cone 11.





Our Soda Kiln – the story so far.



The new kiln at COAM was conceived as a wood-burning one and the same design was followed as for what we initially called 'Laura's wood kiln' which had proven to be excellent for short group firings.

This one was built in March last year, 2025, and given a preliminary firing on April 5th without a load, to test and dry it out. At this point comparisons were made with the first kiln and alterations made to the new one by enlarging the air inlet. That dummy firing had shown that the flue and inlet were different to the original and were out of balance.

The members in this new group then had to make preparations for the first

full firing. Draw rings, kiln wash and batt wash had to be made, in addition to the pots, soda slips and suitable glazes. Soda firings produce the same chemical glaze as salt, but are considered less polluting. Salt can be placed in the kiln in packets placed among the pots whereas soda is generally sprayed in as an almost boiling solution when the kiln is firing around 1220C or more. Precautions have to be taken at all stages and protection is needed when opening the ports at high temperature, ie goggles, masks and a long iron prong to extract the rings.

13th April saw the first full firing. After all that research and preparation all went well and the results were excellent.



The only niggle was that the pressurised hand pumps were old and the seals had gone. They still delivered, but not that well. The addition of some salt packs helped boost the results. It was all very encouraging.

The second firing was on June 14th and that also went well though the lower shelf was slightly under fired. In both these wood kilns the shelves have to be carefully placed and a little offset to allow the heat to circulate and ensure an even firing.

There followed a summer break till October when Amanda, Emma and Tim held a slip and glaze making session.

The fourth firing was on 9th Nov and this was something different, a raw firing. It had to be longer than the others and as it was held well after the Equinox, lights were set up at the site. Two shifts were arranged of 6 hours each and three hardy souls opted for the full 12 hours. At least 5 were on hand throughout. The pots that came out were good and the sense of achievement and camaraderie was high.

This year has already seen a January firing. This was led by potter Anthony Dix who provided more ideas and a different approach. This time the kiln lid cracked. Kiln shelves are not intended to be used this way, and the team are discussing better alternatives as I write.

This is a massive learning project, every success bringing another challenge with it. The participants have been drawn into a fascinating area of ceramics and are learning fast. They are constantly comparing glaze results, tweaking the firing schedules and improving their firing techniques.

For more information or to join in please contact Lyndsey at lmiles514@icloud.com



Recipes

Raw clear glaze	
Potash feldspar	25
Ball clay	25
Flint	25
Whiting	25
Bentonite (white)	25

Shino orange red glaze

Nepheline syenite	80
China clay	50
AT ball clay	10

Classic Shino

Nepheline syenite	80
China clay	20

Basic Soda Slip

China clay	80
Nepheline syenite	10
Flint	10
Bentonite (white)	5

Colour up by adding
Cobalt oxide 0.5% = Blue

Manganese 5% =
Purple/black
Rutile 4% = Gold
Copper oxide 6% = Green



Katherine Kingdom

by Ros and Jackie

Katherine joined us as our January guest artist, braving miserable weather and bringing a ray of warmth and jollity with her delightful quirky pots. These are brightly coloured and decorated with charming cartoon figures, giving a storybook quality to her functional pieces.

Her accompanying sketch books of beautiful drawings and colourful washes show that she is indeed a fine artist who uses her imagination to create stories in whatever she sees. Like a jazz musician she revels in improvisation, creating the script as she goes. To make each figure she tears off a small piece of clay and rolls it even thinner. Two pieces are applied to the pot, the smaller one becoming the head and the longer one the body. A second figure is placed beside it and then imagination gets to work and the story emerges. What are these two up to? Who is saying what to whom? A thin tool draws in the details of the face and clothing, and the story of their interaction is done.



As a former teacher, she spoke expertly as she worked. 'At one point she involved the audience in a paired activity using small paper strips' to mirror her approach and to demonstrate how the characters which decorate her work evolve from torn fragments whose interactions emerge as the pieces are juxtaposed. As participants we were encouraged to interpret and invent the relationship of the figures as we positioned them on the paper and invented our own storylines.



Her style is simple yet highly effective, using unsophisticated materials to create playful pieces, leaving enough ambiguity for the observer to interpret using their own imagination and provoking smiles and laughter as she goes.



Much of her work begins as fine slabs, but that is a misnomer for these delicate pots. Using fairly firm clay she rolls out thin sheets by hand. Cylinders are formed by wrapping a small piece around formers such as tin cans covered in newspaper to aid release. Cups, vases and similar are often formed of two short cylinders stacked one on top of another allowing for a slight overhang.

Handles may be pulled or torn, or squidged on.



Some of her characters emerge as sculptures and she also takes commissions working from photos and ideas about the people involved to create personalised pieces.





She uses Scarva Earthstone clay bisque fired to 1020C and glaze fired to 1230C. She uses brush on glazes from a number of sources; Scarva, Potclays, Bath Potters and Mayco.

These are diluted to give muted water colour effects as underglazes. She particularly favours Botz Spectrum, Mayco and Clear Potclays Stoneware Matt which she dilutes with a glaze medium and water to achieve the matt finish which she prefers.



For more information see her website at www.fatbellypots.art



Lesley Farrell



Lesley Farrell and almost 30 members braved another cold wet winter's night for a Friday night potters' meeting. To wet our appetites she had brought three of her stunning pots.

Lesley is a ceramic artist specialising in finely crafted vessel forms that rise from



a narrow base. Many are double walled with smooth surfaces traced with the patterns of old lace. She has a degree in ceramics from Loughborough, an MA in photography from Nottingham Trent, and a PGCE in art and design from Brighton. Her photography has fostered an interest in architecture and the patterns to be found on memorials and other decorations in the built environment.



Her work is sold in galleries including the CCA in London. She is also an established curator working with museums and other educational establishments.

Lesley makes her pots mostly by coiling. This is a slow process to watch, but is most enjoyable to do as one gets into a rhythm and develops one's own technique. Lesley has her own special way:

1. She uses Ashraf Hanna clay. With its high molochite content (+58%) it shrinks little and holds its form well.

2. She makes her steep sided bowl forms UPSIDE DOWN.

3. She rolls out all her coils by hand (rather than extruding) with her fingers splayed out as she moves the clay away from the centre.

4. During the demo the coils were made one at a time. Each one being used before the next one was made.

5. She works on a board placed on a banding wheel which rotates as needed.

6 The first coil will form the rim of the pot. She continues by placing the next coil slightly inside the last one.

7. The clay is pinched down on both sides to meld the coils together while the left hand supports the piece from inside, ensuring that the form does not start to slump outwards.



8. When four coils are on, using a serrated metal kidney she works the outside of the pot to move clay from the bottom upwards at an angle and then the inside in the opposite direction. A smooth kidney is used to smooth the surface.

9. Working this way on several pots at a time allows her to judge when to rest a pot and allow the clay to firm up. She finishes coiling when the top (ie base) is reached and there remains only a modest gap to fill.

10. By now some will have grown to the size of her kiln and Lesley showed us how she turns these pots over, ie very carefully, using a board top and bottom.

11. The base is completed by making a pinch pot in the hand, placing it over the hole and working it on. A small coil is pressed around the join on the inside and both sides of the base are scraped even with a surform and then a smooth metal kidney.

12. To make a double walled vessel a second, smaller one is made and placed inside.

In this case an air hole must be made in the base.

It would have been interesting to see how two bowls are joined at the top, but Lesley moved on to the next stage.

13. The work is bisque fired before



surface decoration is applied. She sprays on two layers of engobes. The first over the whole pot and the second through pieces of crotchet work and lace fabric, much of which she sources from flea markets and charity shops.

NB Engobes have more flux than slips but less than a glaze, and hers are coloured by oxides or commercial stains. See next col.

14. Transparent glaze is then applied to selective areas of the pot.

Additional notes by Lesley

The double walled pieces are fired twice only (bisque then engobe/glaze).

The single walled vessels are fired 3 times, as I can only apply the interior glaze to these once the engobes are fired on.

These pieces have 2 bisque firings (the first with the clay completely bare, the second when the coloured engobes have been applied), followed by a third glaze firing.



My engobe base is:

35% ball clay

35% Feldspar

(potash or soda)

15% China clay

15% quartz

I add 10% stain for most colours. I buy my stains from CTM pottery supplies.

For the metallic black/brown colour seen on some of my pots I add 8% iron oxide, 5% manganese dioxide, 5% copper carbonate.

The oxides act as a flux in the engobe, and the piece will stick to the kiln shelf if applied to the bottom of the pot. It also means that the colour moves around in transparent glaze when this is applied over the top, giving a mottled effect.

By Ros McGuirk with thanks to Georgina for the use of her notes and especially to Lesley for kindly adding her additions, as well as demonstrating for us.



John Higgins at POD

Jackie Harrop

"If you know what it's going to look like before you start, why bother?"

We are incredibly lucky to have John as our President and also as the creator of our POD programmes over the years. He has brought us dancers, professors, poets, activists and national treasures. POD keynote speakers have always brought surprises, inspiration and insights and this year was no exception as we turned the tables on John and asked him to share his story with us. It took quite a bit of persuading as he is a modest and unpretentious man whose talents are underestimated, but thankfully he surrendered.

We all know John is a technical expert, experienced as a thrower and hand builder, a Fellow of the Craft Potters Association, a respected member of the International Academy of Ceramics and an experienced teacher with a successful history at Harrow College. We were also aware of his many invitations to exhibit and complete residences in China, Australia, South Africa, and the major exhibitions such as CAL, Oxford, and Art in Clay among others.

John's story is rooted in Stoke on Trent where he was born and raised surrounded by the raw evidence of an industry begun by Josiah Wedgewood in 1759. It was Wedgewood's systematic experimentation and entrepreneurship which led to the area becoming a global leader in pottery manufacture. (He was also an abolitionist and the grandfather of Charles Darwin).

The best stories begin with questions, not answers, and John began by asking "what do we see?" and "why do things



become sacred?" He began with a dramatic explanation behind the old striped jug which was rescued when a plane crashed close to his house as a child.

He went on to identify the inspiration of flatbacks by Obadiah Sherratt, in particular 'Polito's Menagerie', a collection of exotic animals taken to funfairs and its links to Wallace the lion, now stuffed and memorialised in Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens.

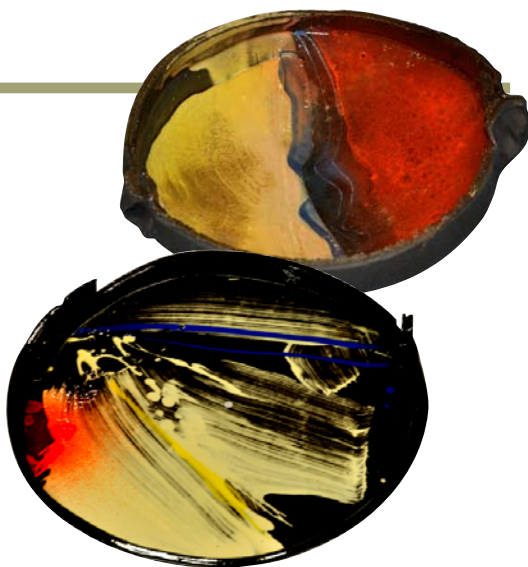
His work evolved from the influences of Cretian pottery and the architecture of Frank Gehry, Jean Nicholas Gerard and, following a visit to Ayres Rock, the incredible painting of Emily Kame Kngwarreye and extruded forms of Norwegian ceramicist Torbjorn Kvasbo.





The freshness John brings to British ceramics is rooted in his capacity to experiment, his passion for the material and a curiosity and energetic playfulness. He cuts and alters thrown and slabbed forms to make interesting profiles whose surfaces are decorated with dramatic use of colour and line inspired by landscapes, seascapes and skies. His collection of brushes is impressive and dramatic use of colour and line inspired by landscapes, seascapes and skies. His newly refurbished studio space is a wonderful environment for his work.

The emotional driver for his latest work, reflects the sensitivity of a man who cares, who expresses himself as many of us do, conveying meaning through the medium of the material, in ways which go beyond words. This final moment of his talk brought us full circle, to the hidden meanings, known best by



the creator, communicated to the observer sometimes in obvious, but other times hidden in the textures, the colours, and in the processes, the mindful process of creating, spontaneous or planned, but courageously executed and shared



Toni De Jesus at POD 2026 by Lyndsey Miles

Cardiff-based ceramic artist Toni De Jesus was our first demonstrator at POD 2026. His work was as thought-provoking as it was technically illuminating. Known for work that sits at the intersection of craft and fine art, function and sculpture, Toni brought both his practice and his philosophy into the room and left us with plenty to think about.

He has a practice that is rooted in identity. He studied at Brighton before completing his BA in Cardiff. From early on, his approach was shaped by instinct and a genuine love of working with clay. He found relief in self-expression and problem-solving, and is also drawn to textiles, photography and fine art alongside ceramics.

Central to his work is the tension between opposites, beauty and function, control and chance, belonging and displacement. Born in the UK but raised in Madeira, Toni has spent his career finding the commonalities between those two worlds, and that





search is embedded in his practice. The vessel, for him, is never simply a container. It is a vehicle for questions of identity, memory and instability.

During his BA he began exploring how the vessel could be disrupted, making objects that look functional but aren't. A teapot with the lid fixed shut, for instance. He describes finding the "tipping point of becoming" where a piece hovers between one thing and another.

Toni works primarily with terracotta and porcelain, and is unapologetic about the two getting messy together, splashes of terracotta on porcelain are not accidents to be corrected but expressions of working with both materials.



His work is almost entirely hand-built using coiled construction. During the demonstration he walked members through his process: rolling a base with a rolling pin and 5mm rods, building walls with soft clay coils, blending inside and out on a whirler, using a heat gun carefully between stages. He uses newsprint to prevent sticking, scores and slips with clay from the same body, and creates an elevated foot cutting away at an angle on the base. When moving the clay through his hands he says, "It becomes you." He's describing that feeling when we know our material and we sense what it needs.

A striking aspect in part of his practice is the use of flux. He experiments with high alkaline frit by adding it to clay bodies at varying percentages. He also adds sand directly to coils (rolling them across a sandy surface before building). The results blister, shift and surprise. "Often you think you are in control," he told us, "But the clay is always in control."

His firing process reflects the complexity of his decorative work: bisque at 1000°C, glaze at 1240°C, decals at 830°C, and gold lustre at 750°C. Some pieces go through up to seven firings due to layered decals and lustre applications!



In 2022, Toni was invited to contribute to a queer collection at Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. That work (decorated with pansy flowers) was the moment he came out to his father. He spoke with care about the pansy's symbolic weight, and how that project became a turning point in his decorative practice. It was also what led to an approach from a New York gallery, drawn to the delicacy and meaning embedded in his floral work.

He demonstrated his technique for making ceramic flowers: pinching and rolling clay between thumb and finger, pressing petals to a central form, then attaching them to the pot's surface using score and slip. The effect moves the surface from flat to three-dimensional. He spoke of the unnamed women of The Gladstone Pottery who spent their working lives making porcelain flowers and speaks to his own work as a way of making something perishable permanent. "Flowers are a dying thing," he said. "By using them this way, you make them immortal."

His photographic decals, sourced or taken himself (edited in Photoshop) are soaked in water, applied to the pot, and worked into the surface with a sponge and brush before an overnight dry and firing. He also shared a practical tip: wax resist applied at joins slows shrinkage and helps attachments hold.

Toni discussed Cacúlo, an exhibition developed in Portugal. The title draws from a Portuguese slang term meaning "pile of earth," and the project was deeply rooted in material, land and personal history. He researched local vessel traditions spanning some 600 years and tested clays sourced from a path that



had once connected villages as a trade route; a path his own ancestors would have walked. Working on a large scale, he built a piece but chose not to fire it. "It doesn't need to be fired," he said. A decision that reframes what a finished ceramic object can be. Unfired, the work became bound to its place of origin, its material still carrying the memory and story of that landscape. The titles of the pieces were carefully chosen to signal the metaphors embedded within. Since its debut, Cacúlo has travelled through three venues and is currently on show at Aberystwyth Arts Centre, where Toni made the considered decision to present his work alongside pieces from the centre's own collection, a dialogue between his practice and the ceramic histories already held in that space.

Toni has shown at the British Ceramics Biennial, Ceramic Art London, and internationally in Portugal, Miami and New York. In 2024 he was featured in *Vogue USA*, named a rising star at *Homo Faber* in Venice, made a Selected Member of the Craft Potters Association, and had his *Fleabane Vase* included in *The Guardian's Design Highlights* of the year. Most recently, he appeared on the front cover of *Ceramic Review* and currently he has an exhibition at Aberystwyth Arts Centre. He will be back at CAL in May.

Yet for all that, what came through most strongly was an artist who remains genuinely open and generous.



He says yes to everything from major gallery shows to small pop-ups, believing that conversations happen in all kinds of spaces. He sketches sometimes, but often not, preferring the freedom of not knowing exactly where a piece is going. "Making leads to more making," he said and I too truly believe this. <https://www.tonidejesus.com/>



On Paul Young at POD 2026

Andre Hess

Introduction

There seems to be a kind of stillness and a calm afoot when arriving at the Potters Open Days of late. This must surely attest to the quality of the organisation of the event, and the well-rehearsed choreography of the program.

Paul Young was introduced to the audience by Judi Tribe, who gave us a potted history of his work.

To prevent confusion Paul Young stepped forward to stand alongside the wheel and sang a line from the song 'Everything Must Change' and proclaimed that he was not that Paul Young. With that cleared up, he gave a summary of his biography in clay.

Who is Paul Young?

Paul Young is a mid-career potter working somewhere near the middle of England. He makes 'English slipware'. It is immediately apparent that this term, when applied to his work, hides what amounts to a kind of explosion of shapes, details and colours that had come out of the idea of English slipware and its techniques. It must be said, very loudly, that Paul Young does not make



'heritage ware'. Evident in all the work is his individual voice. He has taken the idea and tradition of mantelpiece items, such as candlesticks, flatbacks, figurines, commemorative plates, serving dishes and 'kitchen' plates, and rendered these in a language that is recognisably his only.

Paul was raised on a council estate and 'fell out' of school, with all the complexities and warmth of this kind of personal history. 'Pottery' in school provided a



kind of epiphany that was recognised as such later. His only job after leaving school was in a paint and wallpaper shop and lasted a year. We take from and learn from everything we do, and sometimes this happens without us fully aware of it. Things like wallpaper designs, the smell of paint, and just the weight and feel of material, can come to sit as a memory in the belly and can help to persuade one to and from things.

Paul described being accepted on a foundation course as life-changing, and then came 'Sheffield' and 'Chesterfield', where he was let in by sheer luck and Geoff Fuller. Another eye-opening moment was a visit to the Ceramics Museum at Stoke-on Trent. Imagine being at that stage in your career when you are pinching, coiling, slabbing, and throwing and then walking into those densely packed galleries of that museum and those seemingly 'impossible pots' especially from the 18th Century. But it was English and European folk art and pottery that moved him. Around where he lived these earthenware pots for use were called 'pans', and it is the way these were made and decorated that became his vocabulary. Paul described breaking into the college at weekends so he could work. He had found his metier and his reason for living.

What did Paul make?

Paul made one of his complex candlesticks for us, and applied slip to a couple of plates, painting hares using only a handful of lines. The candlestick consisted of a wheel-thrown drip tray with a solid 'trunk' ("We need that weight", he said, which is right), two very carefully



coiled branches as handles, press-modelled leaves as sprigs, press-moulded florets, and hand-modelled birds were added. In his studio he uses a mix of two clays. He biscuit fires to 1100 degrees Celsius with a 60 minute soak. He glaze-fires to the same temperature, but without a soak. He likes his colours to run a little and describes his technique as 'half-majolica-half-slipware'. He assembled the entire structure in our presence, describing the greenery he was applying as 'bocage' (the hedge itself and a landscape of hedges). This way of making, of course, attests to the complete understanding of how the clay behaves when still soft.

A particular highlight was when Toni De Jesus joined him on stage and made several of his flowers, which were added to Paul's candlestick, a collision of two worlds. It worked.

Where does Paul Young work?

He had the good luck of finding his studio space in the form of a disused Victorian railway station by Shenton in Leicestershire, disused apart from the occasional 'heritage' train.

And what is Paul going to concentrate on next?

'I loving making dogs at the moment. Lurchers, Whippets, Greyhounds, I like craziness. I like the work of Mark Hearld, his subject matter, his freedom, and how his paint moves.'



Discussion

Paul again mentioned English and European folk art and how he 'looks at everything'. This is something particularly powerful when the dominant form in studio pottery is makers looking largely at other pots.

Paul has always been moved by his own work and its origin in powerful personal moments, epiphanies, instances of good luck, and having his attention captured by traditional slipware, so counter to Leachean stoneware and its Anglo-orientalism. He has found his own voice, and his work is easily recognised as his.

There is a kind of Catholic maximalism in Paul's work, a feeling of joy and of story. The pieces glow and vibrate and they buzz with detail and colour that draw the eye. Their materials are simple and few, his methods traditional, but the end-result is complex and coherent, looking backwards to the past and simultaneously to the now. What do pots do all day? They hold or contain; they pour; they display status and aspiration; they display ideology; they display social class; they show levels of education; they memorialise; they commemorate; pots enact social functions and participate in ritual; they perform in the home and in the museum; they can perform even when still; they are relational (when more than one person loves the same pot); they are adaptable to situations; they can invite feelings of love. It is possible to argue that Paul Young's work does almost all these things.





Selling your work on St Albans Market

St Albans Market has been held every Saturday since 1553 (unless there are high winds!). The DCPG are registered as 'occasionals' – which means that we can apply to have a stall any Saturday and will be allocated a pitch if one of the 'regulars' is having a weekend off. This does mean that the position of the stall can be hit or miss and we sometimes don't get one at all, but usually the organisers do try to put you in the best position they have available on the day. Of course, you can apply as an individual, but the advantage of applying through the DCPG is that we have done the paperwork and you are covered by their public liability insurance. Your work is your own responsibility, but if you are a member of something like the Craft Potters Association, they will cover your work in transit or at an event.

The market can be quite windy, so light garden gazebos are not really strong enough and you do need to weight the gazebo properly. You can arrange to borrow the robust one belonging to the DCPG, which is stored at Kingsbury Barn. We don't usually put up the banner as this can be a bit of a wind trap, but you can hand out leaflets about the Guild when these are available. You can also display posters or flyers about forthcoming Guild events – and, of course, you will have lots of opportunity to talk to people about pottery.

All the 'dos and don'ts' are available on the St Albans Council pages, but basically, you have to be set up as soon after 8.00am as possible. They will give you a voucher for parking one vehicle for the day. The stalls cost around £55 for the



day and you usually have access front and back of your stall, or sometimes on three sides, if you are on the end of a run. You can start packing up at 4.30, but you cannot bring your vehicle back on site until 5.00pm.

It really is great fun. There is a wide array of street food or cafes to tempt you and there are several public loos which are quite civilised. We are usually the only hand crafted pottery stall and we generally find that we sell quite well. Unlike other markets, we sell better in the afternoons: the morning is for purposeful shoppers, the afternoon is for meanderers...

If you fancy having a stall, do email me on beverly.benson2@gmail.com and I will put in an application. If you decide to pair up and share the cost, do be aware that you often only have one table that is facing the foot traffic, so you will need to share that, too!



London Potters 40th Anniversary Weekend

by Margaret Tatton Brown

This event was held at the Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square. The Art Workers' Guild was founded in 1884 with the aim of promoting the exchange of information between artists. It was only in 1964 that it was agreed that women should be admitted! Before then, women were only allowed to participate in monthly meetings. One interesting discovery I made, which was obviously the result of the relative unimportance of women, was that up a narrow, twisted staircase, two of the original sanitary arrangements, created by Thomas Crapper b.1836, were still in use.

For the exhibition, thirty potters were given half a table each in the Lecture Hall. The exhibition was designed to be as varied as possible. I did, however, notice that porcelain was the main clay body, followed by stoneware and that there was no earthenware.

I was particularly impressed by some exquisite, well thrown porcelain. Clover Lee, for instance, who people may remember from the Great Pottery Throwdown, had some lovely blue and white porcelain. Her small espresso mugs were priced at £35 each

The majority of people who came to the event were London Potters. Many of them seemed to be attracted by the lectures rather than the exhibition. Talks were given by Kate Malone, Stuart Carey, Felicity Aylieff and Rich Miller. There was also a group discussion on sustainability and a demonstration by Jemma Gowland of figurative porcelain. Other attractions included an exhibition of 40 miniatures by invited ceramicists and the chance to decorate three large greenware vessels. Altogether, it was a very well organized, friendly event held in a fascinating, historic building.



Glaze Inspiration Louisa Taylor and Simon Punter Jackie Harrop

This is a detailed "how to" book full of encyclopaedic information and photographs covering every stage of glaze making, applying and firing.

It is a treasure trove which will delight those with an inclination towards chemistry and mathematics and who enjoy the experimental and analytical pursuit of the perfect glaze to suit a particular style of decoration. There are ample tables of formulae, recipes and practical hints and tips including common faults and health and safety considerations.

It also has lots of suggestions on how to

use a wide variety of glazes with a fascinating approach to themes, colours and textures tracking a lifetime of experimentation and ideas. The thematic approach reveals how the natural world, food, land and sea, seasons, urban environments have inspired the imaginative development of glazes.

The glossary and recipes alone make this a worthwhile resource on any potter's shelf, with its rich source of ideas to encourage makers to stretch boundaries, and innovate to find unconventional and rewarding results.



Luminous Clay by Angela Mellor

Jackie Harrop

This beautifully photographed book by artist Angela Mellor is a very personal story of her journey from being a ceramics teacher in Cambridge to her explorations of porcelain, bone china and paper clay in Australasia.

She is clearly fascinated by the whiteness, translucency, and tough yet delicate nature of porcelain, bone china and paper clay, and admires and documents the techniques that she and other makers use to achieve incredibly delicate and translucent forms. She explains the challenges of working with these notoriously temperamental and sometimes-fragile materials and explains how to push them to their limits.

She describes how high shrinkage rates, a tendency to warp, and unforgiving memory for bumps and knocks mean that seams may peel apart and mistakes return after firing, and gives helpful guidance on how to avoid or rectify these potential risks.

The methodology sections cover a detailed explanation of slip preparation and casting, mould making, using textured paper-thin slabs, throwing and carving, surface decoration using oxides and iridescent lustres as well as resist

and soluble colourants. She includes useful formula tables for those who seek the mathematical precision to replicate these delicate colour combinations which work differently on porcelain or bone china and also formula tables for making plaster moulds

There is a brief section on glazing and firing and a lengthy section on light and lighting.

She is clearly fascinated by the passage of light through porcelain, bone china and paper clay and explores the subtle variations in its behaviour with thickness, lighting, piercing slicing and other texturing devices.

As well as showcasing her own work, now available through her studio in Cambridgeshire, she includes fascinating photographs of the work of a wide range of international artists with beautiful examples from Monika Patuszynska, Maggie Barnes, Dorothy Freibleman, Sasha Wardell and many others from across the globe.

This book is an excellent source of guidance and reference for those wishing to push their limits and I know at least one of our members will be keen to snap this up.



Throwing Clay by Rebecca Proctor

Jackie Harrop

This is a 'how-to' book for beginners and those who want to further develop their throwing skills. It takes potters right from the start, understanding clay conditions, preparing oneself and the clay to throw, through to precise step by step guides on how to make specific functional items, from cylinders and on to vases, teapots, plates, and lids.

The illustrations also make this a useful reference on tools and processes.

It includes tips and suggestions for troubleshooting as well as interviews from a wide range of potters who give step by step guidance on their preferred approach to making classic forms.

This is a perfect beginners reference.



Gabriel Newfield 1930-2026

Jackie Harrop

Many of you will have seen Gabriel as he was a regular attendee at demonstrations and events and an avid collector of ceramics. What most of us didn't know, was what an amazing man he was and what an incredibly interesting and influential life he had lived. It's a sad truth that we all see a miniscule slice of people and the rounded version and the full story often become apparent when people who knew and loved them share their recollections at a funeral or service of remembrance.

Gabriel was never a potter himself, but a long term member of the Guild. He was however well known and respected as a lecturer at LSE and then Hatfield Polytechnic which became the University of Hertfordshire where he was the Dean of Social Studies and

Pro-Director of the college. He was a sociology lecturer with strong socialist beliefs and the courage and determination to challenge political biases. When realising that FE courses in politics, economics, law and sociology were insufficiently challenging for many of the brighter students he established degree courses. He went on to advise colleges at High Wycombe, West Herts, Stevenage and St Albans to develop more advanced courses. He also supervised and nurtured many PhD students and research councils.

I first met Gabriel at DCPG events then at U3A walking groups where he was always striding out ahead of the group.

We'll miss seeing him at our demos and events.



Chris Sharp

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