ANGLIAN POTTERS NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2024

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Cover Photograph

Paper-clay figure by Andrew Wright

Photograph: Andrew Wright

Andrew reveals all about his paper-clay process in the creation of this unique piece in "How I Use My Paper Clay – The Wright Way, Part One" on p. 18.

Contents – Spring 2024

Chairman's Letter

A belated Happy New Year to everyone, and best wishes for 2024. I hope the new year will bring new enthusiasm and inspiration for your ceramics!

It was rather a shame that we had to cancel our first meeting of the year, when we were expecting a visit from Sharon Griffin. January's meeting is always well attended, with a feeling of coming out of hibernation, and a time when we can all get together again. Unfortunately, Sharon had made other arrangements, and Trudy found out too late to find an alternative demonstrator. So our first meeting of 2024 will be in early March. I know that Trudy was very disappointed, as she spends a lot of time finding great demonstrators and making the arrangements. This is the first time I can recall having to cancel a meeting in the last 20 years (apart from Lockdown!). We do have a very good programme for the rest of the year, so I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible.

We heard some very sad news just after Christmas, not about one of our members, but someone many of us have met and counted as a friend. Pat Fuller from Derbyshire, founder of the Wardlow Mires Pottery and Food Festival, passed away just after Christmas. Words from her family.

"Pat had a profound passion for both pottery and food, a love that she shared with her late husband, Geoff. Together, they organised the annual Wardlow Mires Pottery and Food Festival, a testament to their dedication to fostering creativity, camaraderie, and a love for the arts. Pat revelled in the friendships that blossomed during these festivals, savouring the unique blend of culinary delights and artistic expressions.

"Her enthusiasm for the festival was enormous, and she found immense joy in witnessing the vibrant tapestry of creativity woven by fellow enthusiasts. Pat's legacy will undoubtedly endure through the memories created at these gatherings, a testament to the indelible mark she left on our hearts."

We thoroughly enjoyed our weekends at Wardlow, just a group of like minded individuals in a marquee having good time with pots and food! Pat was a good friend. A show is planned for September this year, a fitting tribute.

We hope to run a series of workshops in the spring at our campsite at Stoke Farm. The plan is to run a series of different firings over successive weekends, so we can get the infrastructure in place for a few weeks. More details will be publicised when we have a plan in place. Camp is planned for the first week in August, as usual (31st July to 4th August), so work needs to start soon! We are hoping to spread the load of organising across more members this year, so if you are willing to take on any aspects of camp, please get in touch so we can arrange a get together to kick things off. Email to camp@anglianpotters.org.uk

~ John Masterton

Editor's Notes

As this is the first issue of 2024 I hope it is not too late to wish everyone a very Happy New Year. This is also my first issue as Editor, so before anything else, I must express my most grateful thanks to my predecessor, Carolyn Postgate, not only for stepping in and producing two fabulous bumper issues last year, but also for her patience and help in shepherding me through the whole editorial process. It's been a very steep learning curve, as I had never used InDesign before, and there are lots of elements that come together in the production of each issue that I have had to learn. Many thanks also to Rachael Ped for the lively new design and improvements in the overall quality of our Newsletter. I hope I can do justice to you both and keep up the excellent work.

For those of you who don't know me, I am a relatively new member, having joined Anglian Potters two weeks before Lockdown in 2020! Great timing on my part. So it was a while before I could start participating in events and meeting people in person. I have now done three Christmas shows and attended two Mundford demonstrations, one Potters' Camp and two salt and soda firings, so I feel I am now becoming part of the gang – but I hope to do much more and meet a lot more of you, either in person or virtually, in my new role as Editor.

A bit about me – I first started potting as teenager, going to classes on a Tuesday night at my local art school. I gave up before A levels and then didn't do any pottery for decades until I moved to Cambridge in 2015 and started going to classes again locally, although it took a long while for me to brave the wheel! However, once I did, I got completely hooked, and I've been throwing now for about five years. I've been very fortunate to have been taught variously by Anglian Potters Jeremy Peake, Larry Mogridge, Helen Humphreys, Sarah Went and Matthew Blakeley and have been a member of Kiln Cambridge since 2021. But I still regard myself very much as a novice with lots to learn.

In my day job, I'm an editor – now freelance – working mainly on children's books. My dream is eventually to swap the red pen for the wheel, but for the time being, becoming Editor of our Newsletter is a nice way of combining both interests.

I hope you will find lots to enjoy in this issue. Many thanks to all contributors for some brilliant articles. In the next 40 pages you will, among other things, learn more about paper clay, see lots of images from our most successful Christmas Exhibition yet at All Saints' Church, Cambridge, and read about demonstrations from two very talented potters, Andrew Pearson and Mark Dally. There is also the final article about recreating an Anglo-Saxon kiln and accounts of two raku and salt and soda firings.

Please do take some time if you can to respond to Ian George's survey on online selling, if that's something you have ever tried (see page 7). I for one am very interested in discovering more about people's experiences with this. I'll be publishing his findings in a future Newsletter. It would also be great if members could consider taking part in this June's CamCRAG Art Event in aid of refugees (see page 35).

Finally, please do remember this is *your* newsletter. I welcome any contribution, large or small, on anything pottery-related that you would like to share with other members. I am also always grateful for volunteers to write up our demo days, so let me know if you fancy doing this. The copy date for the next issue is 1 June 2024, but please don't hesitate to contact me any time at anglianpotters@gmail.com with any contributions or ideas.

~Julia Bruce

Christmas at All Saints', Cambridge

The 2023 Christmas Exhibition at the beautiful Arts and Crafts All Saints' Church, Cambridge was our best Christmas show ever, with total sales exceeding £18,000, including almost £1000 of charity Christmas tree decoration sales. The proceeds from this have gone to Kinfest, a charity helping children being brought up by wider family rather than their birth parents.

As well as displaying the work of 63 Anglian Potters, the event also showcased the 40 Years with 40 Potters exhibition curated by Carolyn Postgate (more on page 6).

The Christmas Tree

Rob Bibby

40 Years with 40 Potters

Photos: Carolyn Postgate

Judith Annike-Eriksen

Liz Deeks

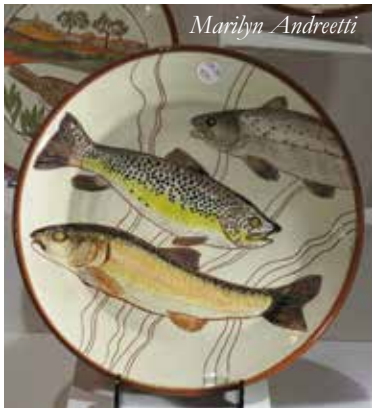
Andrea Morton


Ewa Pandera


Ian Siragher


Richard Cranwell


Joy Voisey


Marilyn Andreetti


Liz Chipchase

Photo: Nicki Darrell

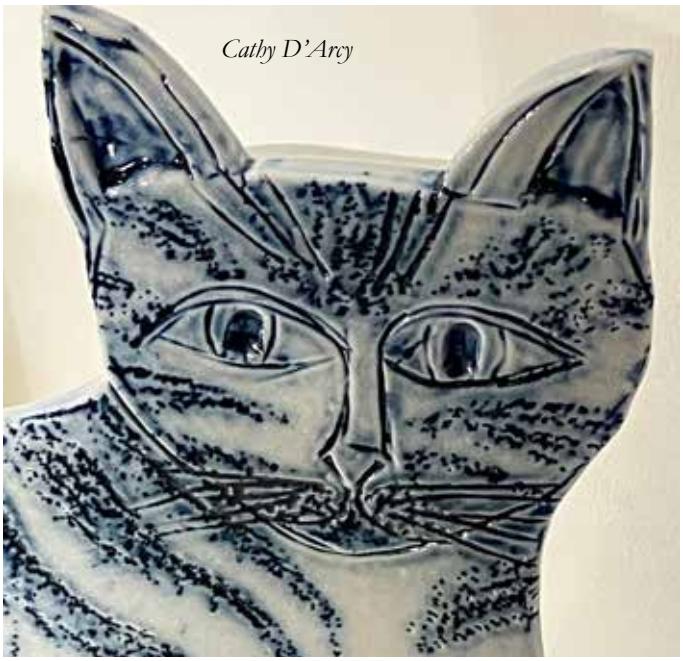
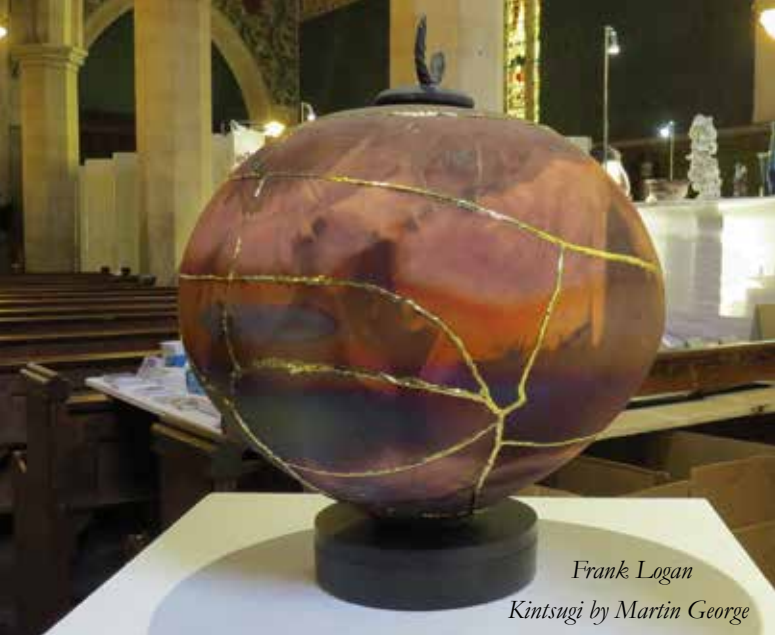

Cathy D'Arcy

Photo: Nicki Darrell

Animal Magic!


Louise Crookenden-Johnson


Ian Pipe



Frank Logan
Kintsugi by Martin George

Photos: Carolyn Postgate

Jacky Lloyd

David Stonehouse

More from the Christmas Exhibition

Photos: Nicki Darrell

Trevor Allen

Selena Bragg

Photos: Carolyn Postgate

Ian Vance

Kevin Strawbridge

40 Years, 40 Potters

East Anglian Potters Association started in 1983 with 102 members. Since then it has changed its name to Anglian Potters (in 2005) and grown to over 550 members. As a celebration of our very successful 40 years I approached 40 potters who were early members of the Association and persuaded them to loan pots for a display both at Potfest Suffolk at Haughley Park in August and for three weeks at the Anglian Potters winter show in Cambridge. The idea was enthusiastically received and supported by the families of potters who are no longer with us. Then began my adventure of visiting potters all over our region to pick up pots and later to return them. In all I covered over 1000 miles, reconnected with so many old friends and visited amazing studios.

~Carolyn Postgate

Photos: Carolyn Postgate

Pascale Penfold

Wysing Arts Centre's Ceramics Studio is now more accessible than ever!

Wysing Arts Centre is pleased to announce that our Ceramics Studio is now open to members six days a week, Tuesday to Sunday.

Weekdays, the studio is open from 10 a.m. until 8 p.m. and at weekends from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.

Artist Robert Foster-Jones said: "Wysing's Ceramics Studio has provided the perfect environment to develop my work, experiment, and learn new techniques as part of a friendly and supportive community.

"Using the studio has inspired me to test out methods and try materials that I have not tried previously. With the advice and encouragement of the other studio members I have gained the confidence to make up my own glazes, a process which I now love!"

Photos: Lucy Rose Shaftain-Fenner

The Ceramics Studio hosts a range of equipment, which includes two electric pottery wheels, one kick wheel, two kilns, glazes and moulds. Clay is available to purchase.

Members can access the studio for up to 8 hours or 16 hours per week as part of a monthly subscription.

Our membership is currently available only to those with some experience of working with ceramics already and who can work unsupervised in a shared studio.

Applications for memberships are open until we reach capacity – spaces are limited! Once the studio is full, we will operate a waiting list.

To apply, please visit:

https://tinyurl.com/wysing-ceramics-apply

And visit here for more information:

https://tinyurl.com/wysingceramics

or email us at: info@wysingartscentre.org

Online Shop Survey

I would love to give online sales a try, but am certain there are lots of pitfalls, so here's my idea. Why not ask those of you who are already doing it for your experience, collect together the results, and tell everyone what I find out?

Are you already selling online, or you did try it and it didn't work for you? Please take a couple of minutes to complete this online survey. Here's the link:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/5HG5JDQ

There are nine simple questions and an option to enter an email address at the end. I'll collect together the results of the questionnaires and follow up on any email addresses with a few supplemental questions if I have any. If people would like to send me a link to their online shops perhaps we can publish a list in the Newsletter or on the website? If you would like to volunteer your top-tips or war-stories or just a weblink to your shop, please email me on ian@iangeorgeceramics.co.uk

Looking forward to all your replies and survey entries.

~Ian George

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Shelfies!

Many thanks to Paul Ostro for sharing these great images of his pottery collection, now on display in his new home.

Photos: Paul Ostro

My pots all now out of storage and expertly arranged by my sister.

(Left) A red jug from the south of France and four espresso cups from Lisa Hammond. [Centre of the top shelf in the main picture.]

(Right) A small salt fired jug by Phil Rogers, bought directly from his pottery. One of the first pots I bought. [Bottom of the three shelves in the main picture, on the extreme right.]

(Left) A tenmoku bowl thrown by me and fired at Potters' Camp. The pattern inside was an accident, a "gloop" as I pulled it out of the glaze bucket. [Bottom of the three shelves in the main picture, right of centre.]

How did Lockdown affect your work?

I had a very thought-provoking email from a member the other day pondering about whether people's work changed during Lockdown. She said she was surprised to find that hers had – and she was producing things unlike anything she had done before. It set us thinking that this could be an interesting thing to ask other members.

Would any of you like to talk about your experience of working in Lockdown? Were you even *able* to work? Maybe you couldn't get to your usual studio space, or had to change what you did, like handbuilding rather than throwing. If you *were* able to work, did you find that potting provided a welcome escape, or did you feel you didn't have the heart to pot during those strange days? Did your work reflect what was going on and how you thought and felt, or were you able to carry on pretty much as normal? If you would like to share your experiences, do send me your thoughts and some photos of your work and I'll put something together for a future Newsletter as a reflection on Lockdown and how it affected people's creative process.

To start the ball rolling, this was my experience. When Lockdown was announced I was still a very novice potter, just going to evening classes locally and the occasional class with Helen Humphreys. But I immediately realised that Lockdown meant I wouldn't be able to pot, and I couldn't face that idea. So I spoke to Helen and she very kindly lent me a desktop wheel, which I set up in my garage. I found being able to go in there and practise my throwing was a wonderful escape. Lockdown actually gave me the impetus create my own clay space and the opportunity to improve my throwing, all of which affirmed for me that pottery was something I wanted to make a large part of my life.

Photos: Julia Bruce

Helen's wheel in my Lockdown garage studio

Some fruits of my Lockdown labours!

~Julia Bruce

Mark Dally – Demonstration Day

I have always loved the fun teapots Mark Dally makes using his signature Black & White Ware with their quirky feet and platinum handles, so I jumped at the chance to see his AP demo on 8th October 2023.

Photos: Nicki Darrell

Mark brought with him an interesting selection of sculptural and functional work, all made in high-fired white earthenware and not forgetting his signature slip trailer which now is available to customers worldwide.

Photo: Trudy Staines

He began with a fascinating presentation about his journey as a ceramic artist. As a child growing up in the late 50s and 60s, he was influenced by the designs he found himself surrounded by, from the family "Ridgeway Homemaker" tea service to the M.C. Escher prints, both of which champion black-and-white.

Arriving at university in the late 1970s, Mark originally trained in textiles for three years before making a switch to ceramics; a background training which he credits with influencing his mark-making to this day, alongside the six months later spent living in Australia where he encountered Aboriginal art and patterns.

Mark uses a variety of techniques to produce his work, including slabs, sprigs and slip moulds, most of which he makes himself. His easily recognisable range of mugs, bowls, jugs and platters are decorated using 9 to 10 designs applied using slip trailing, paper resist and brushstrokes. These he demonstrated on the day with swift and efficient ease, the result of years of practice!

Finally, he applies platinum and gold lustre, which requires a third firing, to handles and knobs.

The Dan Dare and sci-fi comics of his youth heavily influences Mark's sculptural work alongside the design work of Max Fleischer and the illustrations of John Tenniel. But "Originality comes from making your own paths, not by following someone else," Mark says.

The influences of his formative years gave Mark an eye for design, enabling him to take elements from all around him, both natural and man-made, before stretching and changing them to make new patterns of his own.

I always love the opportunity these demos give us to get up close to the work of our visiting ceramicists. It's much more interesting than a photo, and for me, even more meaningful when I've listened to the heart of their makers – what drives and inspires them brings their work alive. This made me reflect; where does each of us draw inspiration for our work from? Is it eclectic or a thread of influences that goes back many years?

Mark's willingness to share without reserve his "how to"s and the chance to try out his slip trailer meant many of us left the demo enthused to try out new techniques. If you missed the demo, Mark's website is well worth a visit: markdallyceramics.co.uk.

Thank you AP for organising another inspiring day!

~Linda Morris

The day provided the opportunity for members to have a go at slip trailing using Mark's tools and techniques, as well as to display some of their own work.


Trialling trailing!


Admiring Mark's ceramics

Photos: Nicki Darrell


Ian George


Andy Wright


Celia Greenaway


Claire Porter


Linda and Peter Morris


Trudy Staines

Members' work on display at the demonstration day.

Natural Pottery Day?

Back last year I was sent a message by a friend, telling me that 5 October was *Natural Pottery Day*. I checked, and it was actually National Poetry Day! But it seemed too good an opportunity to pass up, so I wrote a themed poem for a non-existent Pottery Day. The picture is just for fun – some raku from the firing day last autumn led by Frank Logan and Martin George. See page 24 for more.

Natural Pottery Day

As it's Natural Pottery Day,
I thought I'd throw a rhyme or two,
And spread some slip along the way
to the kiln hearth and the pots I threw
As my eyes glaze over
and the intaglio is set
into the terracotta cover
of earthenware clay while wet
I'll blunge out as the pug mill whirs
and the sagger maker's bottom knocker
clocks out and stumbles up the stairs
to a bed on a plaster bat and crocker
Ee! That were another tough day on the bank.

Photo and poem: Chris Dommett

Anglo-Saxon Kiln-Building and Firing

Why work with local mud when perfectly good clay is available already processed and in nice neat bags?

There's something very satisfying about having a direct hands-on connection with the same clay the ancients used and learning how to use it, even though it may be very poor quality. I also like working in a team – especially on something with a social outcome.

I first heard about this project from a notice on the Anglian Potters website in January 2022 advertising for volunteers – the initial timescale was for that summer, and only allowed a couple of months for us volunteer potters to learn what the local clay could do and to make replica Ipswich Ware pots.

It took longer, of course, until the autumn when the kiln was built and enough pots were ready, but the firing was cancelled by Forestry England, who manage the site, saying there was too high a fire risk with the drought. The kiln was then protected with a cover, and firing was postponed until after Easter, which gave us time to make more work and do some more experiments. The people at Hands on Heritage did a lot of background work to support this project – storing the clay supply, putting in hours of work to collect the firewood and building a cover for the kiln.

Digging the pit for the kiln

Volunteers for the project came from all over East Anglia, which hampered working together and sharing experience. The clay was horrid – very sticky, hard to dry and process, and tended to crack or warp when drying. While very sticky, it perversely didn't like sticking to itself, so cracks between coils was a risk.

We were trying to reproduce the main Ipswich Ware form – what I called a honeypot, because it looks like a Pooh Bear honeypot. Making a good-quality, accurate reproduction of an ancient pot takes a lot of learning and many experimental steps, which we have only just begun to explore. I have visions of being able to show a shard to the pottery expert chap from *Time Team* and him saying

Kiln building inner shape

Photos: Jnana Emmett

The kiln chamber

"Yes, Ipswich Ware!" but at this stage, I'm not sure what he'd say.

The archaeological evidence appeared to show they were made with a thick base that was then trimmed – the archaeologists thought they were trimmed with a knife, but we all know that doesn't work, especially with such sticky clay. This make-method leaves a base with thick and thin walls which, given the water retention qualities of this clay, causes some parts to dry faster than others

Making cob is fun!

and – crack! They were also described as being baggy in form with saggy bases – and again – pot bases do not sag! It looks as if they were made like a thrown pot, which then needed the base trimming. There was debate about whether they were hand-coiled on a spinner, or whether a kick or momentum wheel was used.

The clay mix used was also unclear – what sand did they mix with the clay? No matching sand was sourced with the clay, and many disappointing cracked pots could have been avoided if we'd known what sand to add and how much. To my surprise the Ipswich Ware potters didn't use grog (ground-up pre-fired clay), which would have helped make the clay kinder and the drying easier. I've read

Making the clay dome roof for the kiln

accounts of ancient pots, and they airily mention the use of grog as if it's easy to make – it's not, it's hard work!

Keith Wade, the archaeologist, excavated two kilns in Ipswich. Ancient kilns did not have the advantage of refractory clays to make kiln furniture. The kiln was a hole in the ground like a figure 8 with a stoke hole. There's a mystery around the Anglo-Saxons apparently not knowing about Roman technology – so their kilns are more primitive. One of the Ipswich kilns has a large central pedestal with a flue all round, the pots would be piled on the pedestal leaving a gap all round, and a clay dome built over. The clay dome was wasted each firing, though it would be a source of calcined clay, and the pieces could be used for the next kiln. The other excavated kiln was more rectangular with two long flues like two Tube tunnels with a spine between them, and openings in the tunnel roofs to the kiln floor.

Tumble-stacked pots ready to be fired.

Keith decided to make a kiln using a design that was halfway between the two, with a narrow octagonal central pedestal. It was built in the pit with home-made cob bricks.

Making clay cob is fun and glutinous – the clay (mostly a local brickearth from Bulmer Brick & Tile Co. Ltd) and sand are mixed in a shallow pond (we used plastic tarp with four logs for the edges). You get into it and squidge with your bare feet – on a summer's day it's very pleasant – then, when it's a nice consistency, you add straw and squidge that in. Bricks were formed using a large mould Keith had made – none of us had done this before, but at the end of the day we had produced 30 or more – very

Building the dome on top of hay

Finishing the dome for the second firing

satisfactory! They dried beautifully over the next two weeks. It was a lot of work, and used a lot of materials – not something you'd want to waste.

Looking back at the original documents, I see that a chimney was sketched in – there was much discussion about how to build the dome over the pots as there was concern it would fall in and damage the pots (adding a chimney would have been even more of a concern due to its added weight). The assumption was that Anglo-Saxons didn't know about chimneys. Did they use a wicker frame for the dome and daub that with clay? Or did they build a dome onto hay piled on top of the pots? A wicker framework being rigid would lead to the clay cracking as it dried, so it seemed better to make it like a large pot and allow it to shrink all in one. Maybe we'll try a wicker frame next time to see if it works, as that could also be formed into a chimney.

Beginning the candling

The dome for the first firing was rather haphazard – we used leather-hard slabs that we'd made the week before, stuck together with newly mixed clay, but without obvious vents. We fired with hazel coppice wood obtained from a local wood, using long lengths, which were about the thickness of one's wrist. The long firing from morning through to the small hours reached a plateau temperature and just wouldn't climb any higher. It takes several firings to learn how to fine-tune a primitive kiln like this, but it was a successful first try.

We were very lucky with the weather – it is a beautiful site in the woods near Tunstall. We sat around the kiln under a lovely starry sky, mesmerised by the blazing kiln, with the stoker getting up every few minutes to add to or adjust the coppice wood in the fire mouth, temperature readings being taken regularly and much discussion about how to raise the temperature. By then it was pitch-dark and the kiln was hot so we couldn't make any changes.

For the second firing I proposed that we add another ring of bricks so that the kiln was deeper and there was less dome to build – I'd made a shaped brick mould, and another day's work squidging clay and sand and straw made enough bricks, which Keith built onto the kiln a couple of weeks later. I also re-built the firemouth with a lower sloping arch. The first kiln mouth was possibly too high, which affected the draw of the fire into the kiln. The old firemouth disintegrated when we tried to move it – maybe a better clay mix is needed?

Stoking!

In August last year we were able to do the second firing. This time we had more pots and were re-firing many of those from the first try. We camped for two nights enjoying once again this beautiful location – day 1 to load the kiln, mix a batch of clay with sand and horse hair, and make a dome with thick coiled clay over the straw covered pots. It had ten vents with movable covers, six around the dome and two on top. We fired with (free) ash wood from trees that had died from ash die back – the wood had seasoned standing up. This time we had better safety equipment – a face shield, leather apron, gloves and sleeves – the heat from the firemouth was intense.

There's a nice photo (opposite) after the firing when part of the dome has been removed like a pie crust showing the gap underneath where the hay had burned away, with the dome nicely self supporting. I had made a little protective house for a row of witness cones which was placed on the kiln base – it worked a treat as

it was strong enough for pots to be piled on top, and it showed that we reached temperature (975ºC) whereas the thermocouples were showing 100 degrees cooler.

We finished around 10 p.m. and went to bed, but the kiln was still way too hot to open the next morning so we had to send away the stream of visitors who had come to witness it being opened and went home for a wash and a rest, returning the following morning when

Getting up to temperature (Inset: witness cones in their "house")

the kiln had cooled, but was still 108 degrees. The dome lifted off easily in fragile pieces, the pots were lifted out and filled two large trestle tables. The whole firing was successful with minimal wasters.

With thanks to Keith Wade, our kiln designer, brick mould maker and kiln builder; Ruth Gillet our chief stoker; Phil Royle, assistant stoker, and Deborah Pipe, Karen Kavenagh, Laura Harvey, Rachel Kurdynowska, Sarah Cassel and Dennis Coote, as well as contributing potters Louise Cook and Laura Potter. The huge pile of wood was sourced by Duncan and Tony of the Hands on Heritage project – our special thanks to them.

Removing the "pie crust" dome

Ipswich Ware pottery was made in the town between *c.* AD 680–870. Jars, cooking pots and pitchers were the most commonly made items, simple in design and grey in colour. They were mass-produced and distributed throughout eastern England, and were some of the first of their kind in post-Roman Britain.

Unloading the kiln

About "Hands on Heritage"

Located in Tunstall Forest near Snape, Suffolk, and managed by Forestry England, Hands on Heritage is a charitable organisation offering educational visits for schools, and youth and adult groups. Run by a dedicated group of skilled volunteers, it offers day visits and overnight stays for visitors aged seven and upwards.

About this project

This experimental work is part of the community archaeology project "Rendlesham Revealed: Anglo-Saxon Life in South-East Suffolk". It is run by the Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, and funded by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

~Jnana Emmett

Pots out of the kiln

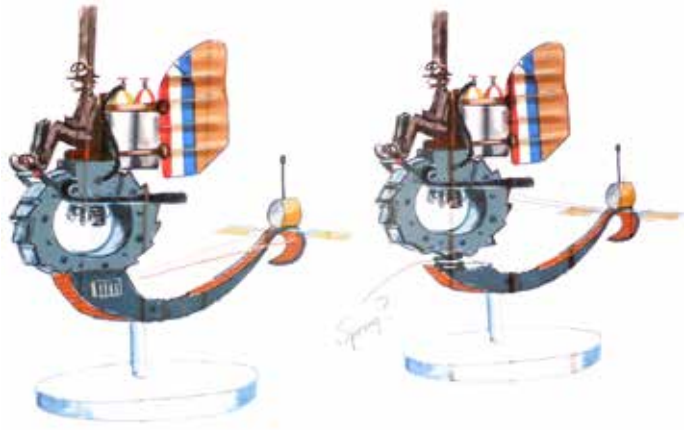
How I Use My Paper Clay . . . The Wright Way Part One

Last time I was at Mundford I thought I would catch Carolyn Postgate and point out that I was afraid that our subs would have to rocket due to the quality of the AP magazine. Good isn't it? No, it's blooming excellent! I knew it was a mistake to speak to her (should have emailed her with my praise) because she said: "Your article about paper clay was very interesting, but how do you use the clay, especially with the pieces that you make?" My reply was quite basic: "I roll it out, cut it up and join it together." But she persisted: "How about an article telling us how you use the clay?" At this point, I wished that I had kept my mouth shut, but years ago I edited a small car magazine (JZR Owners Club for those who were wondering; they are three-wheelers) and I know how difficult it is to get members to put pen to paper.

Thinking about how to pad out an article, I thought that I would try and explain how my machines in paper clay start, i.e. from idea to finished product, or should I say to masterpiece of national importance? I'll stick to finished product as sometimes my pottery defies description.

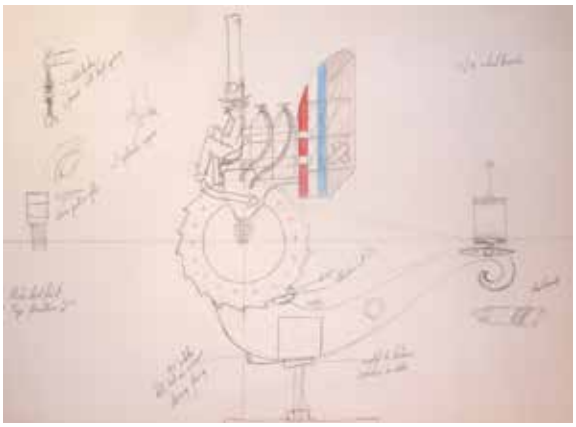
So, let's start at the very beginning. "Where do you get your ideas from?" is a question that I'm often asked. Somewhere, lurking in the depths of my brain, is a memory bank that contains images of machines, architecture, nuts, bolts, fantasy/futuristic stuff, steampunk and museum pieces that I have somehow been able to remember. Then, to get the basic object, I mentally weld some of the various parts together . . . but not necessarily in the right order. I suppose I do have a mechanical bent because I did an apprenticeship as an aircraft technician covering engines, armaments, electrics, airframes and instruments, or Jack of all trades, master of none, as it's been said on many an occasion.

I draw this spark of an idea on my iPad with the aid of an electronic pencil (quite expensive but so useful) and an app called Paper. I can doodle away to my heart's content, rubbing out parts, altering shapes and even copying the



Photos: Andrew Wright

idea so that I save the original but drastically change or alter the copy. At this stage I'm also thinking about how I am going to actually make the thing in terms of structure, support and, of course, glazing. Most of my work is brush glazed so I might have to get a brush into a tight spot without jeopardising the glaze in the surrounding area. So all these things are considered at this stage, but during the build I do not necessarily stick rigidly to the plan. Sometimes things look more balanced by some subtle, or not so subtle, changes, so nothing is set in stone.



I now pick a design that I'm eager and enthusiastic to complete – one that I'm really interested in doing. This is absolutely essential as it gives me the impetus to try and make something of far better quality than the last piece. Each new piece has to be better than the last doesn't it? Otherwise we will never improve.

I already have a lot a lot of varied designs in hand, so it might not be the one that I have just committed to Paper, that is my choice. This chosen subject is now drawn out roughly to scale and appraised for possible snags or compromises that I may encounter in the building of it. Once happy with all of that, it is simply a case of making templates for the larger parts of the structure. Then I'm just about ready to start.

I lay out my table: an old cotton pillowcase that's been opened out (a "Love Is" print on one side shows how old it is, if you remember the cartoons), a canvas-type material for the basic work surface, a bowl of water, a container of paper clay slip, a wooden rolling pin, two

battens, a slab of paper clay approaching the leather hard stage, a container of scraps of paper clay and my trusty tool box. Those of you who went to Camp last year may have seen this box containing tools, tubes, cutters and myriad things that may come in handy for pottery. And, like most vast tool collections, there are only half a dozen items that are used regularly, the rest are there for that odd occasion when you remember that you have one but then spend ages trying to find it amongst the rest.

From now on it's a pretty standard hand builder's procedure. I roll the sheet of clay out until I get the required thickness. I don't use battens, I judge the thickness because I'm using clay that's not far short of being leather hard. I do use the battens, but mainly for cutting straight lines!

With clay at the desired thickness I cut out the pieces using the templates as a guide, and then the construction can start with the first joins. To score or not to score:

that is the question. The answer is: sometimes I do and sometimes I don't. It all depends on the dryness of the clay and the area of the joint. If it is a part that may be subject to a bit of stress then I ensure it's scored. I do, however, use a fairly thick paper clay slip on all joins to glue them together. It's a lovely thick goo. If the clay is a bit on the dryer side then it has to be scored. As the building proceeds, it may be necessary to support the whole form with props made of dried clay, or anything that will be easy to remove when everything is dry. Generally I will have worked out the order in which each subsection will be built and fitted together whilst designing it.

Once the piece is complete and all subsections joined and it has fully dried it is bisque fired in an electric kiln to 960ºC. Following the application of glazes it is high-fired up to 1260ºC.

So that is how I use the paper clay. In Part Two (Summer 2024 issue) I will divulge some of the more specific building methods that I use.

~ Andrew Wright

Programmable Kiln Controllers

It is important to control how the temperature of a kiln changes during a firing. In a bisque firing, it is necessary to complete the physical drying process (up to around 150ºC), then to burn off any organic matter in the clay (up to around 350ºC), followed by driving off the bonded or chemical water in the clay (up to 600ºC or so). This is when the ceramic change takes place. Finally any further carbon and sulphur in the material must be burnt out and the vitrification process started. The first part of the firing, up to 600ºC, is usually taken slowly, at a rate determined by the size and thickness of the work, perhaps at 50–60ºC per hour overnight, and then at a higher rate, say 150ºC per hour to 1000ºC. It can help to fire at slower rates around the dunting point (573ºC) where there are two silica inversions that cause a rapid contraction in the clay, and between 700 and 900ºC to burn out carbon, if your clay body needs it. Glaze firing is usually a bit more straightforward, although soaking at the end of a firing has a considerable effect on the outcome. Some specialised glazing techniques, such as crystalline glazes, need both tightly controlled heating and cooling rates.

Without electronic programmable controllers, kilns typically have a manual dial which determines how much power is supplied to the elements. This must be set by the potter to get the desired rate of temperature increase at any particular time during a firing. That means regular adjustment and so requires constant attention during the firing.

A programmable controller allows the potter to create and store a firing schedule which can be started and then left to complete automatically. The firing schedule consists of a series of segments, each a ramp with a programmable temperature change and a programmable duration. Ramps can increase in temperature, or within limits, decrease slowly. They can have a zero temperature rise, called a "soak", or they can have zero duration, for a "step"change in temperature.

Figure 1 shows the programmed segments of a bisque firing based on an article on the DigitalFire website. The temperature at any given point in time is called the "target temperature". All the charts in this article are exported from a Nabertherm Top 60 kiln with a C440 controller.

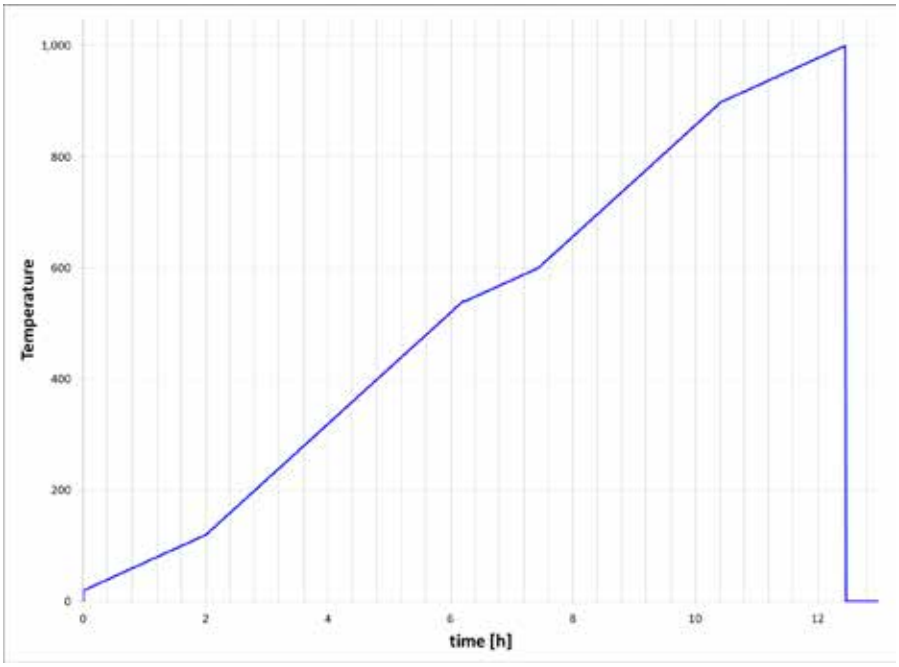


Figure 1. Firing schedule for a bisque firing containing five segments. The rate of temperature increase is slowed at critical points during the firing.

How does the kiln controller follow the firing schedule you have programmed? How can you be confident that it will follow the schedule with minimal error?

During the firing, the controller continuously monitors the kiln temperature, using a thermocouple, and compares it to the target temperature at that particular point in the firing schedule. The controller subtracts the current target temperature from the current kiln temperature and the result is the error at that moment in time. It then makes a decision about how much power to apply to the kiln elements to correct that error. If the kiln is not hot enough, more power is applied to the elements and if it is too hot, then less power.

This technique, which is very common in electronic circuits, is called a "feedback loop" (Figure 2), because the actual kiln temperature is "fed-back" to be compared with the target.

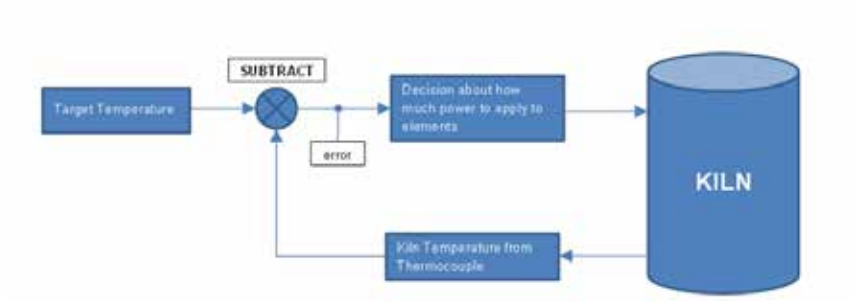


Figure 2. The feedback loop in the kiln controller. The target temperature is changing all the time, in line with the firing schedule.

Figure 3 shows the actual temperature (orange line) of the kiln during the bisque firing in Figure 1. The orange line tracks the blue line (see Figure 1) closely. The pink line, which uses the right hand axis, shows the percentage of full power the controller has applied to the elements at any time.

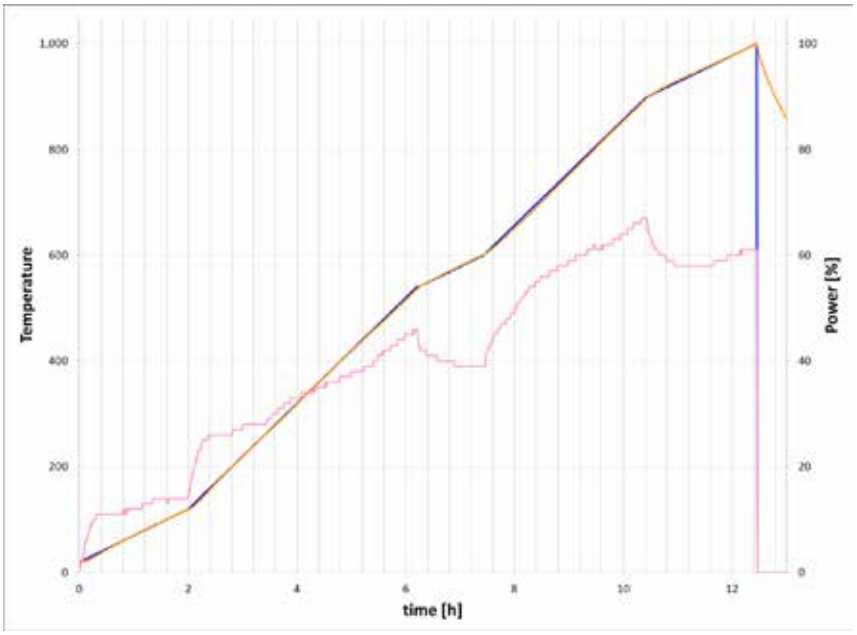


Figure 3. The results of the bisque firing in Figure 1.

Sometimes the potter doesn't want to program a steady temperature increase, but instead wants the kiln temperature to rise as quickly as possible. This is called a "step" change, and is programmed as a ramp with zero duration. Of course, it would be "breaking the laws of physics" if the kiln actually heated up in zero time! The best the controller can do is switch on the elements full, and wait for the temperature to reach the target. However, the temperature will still be actively controlled, using the feedback loop, to make sure it doesn't overshoot; the controller typically applies less power as the target is approached. Figure 4 shows a glaze firing with a step change.

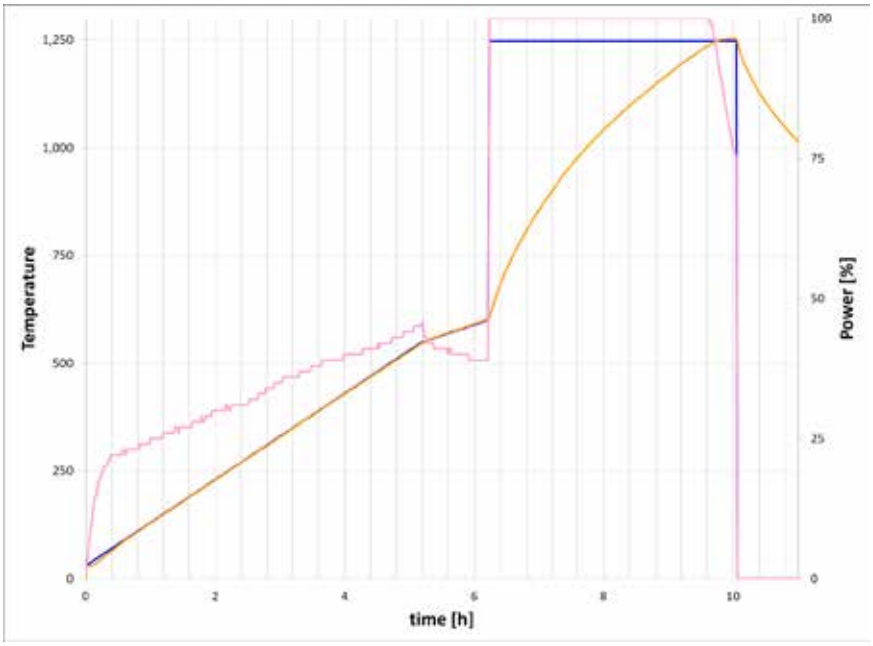


Figure 4. The chart from a glaze firing, including a 20 minute soak at the end. The pink line shows the power applied by the controller.

How does the controller make the decision about how much power to apply for any given error? What is the content of the "decision" block in Figure 2?

The Nabertherm C440 kiln controller, amongst others, uses a method called 'PID' control. Although unfamiliar to most, PID controllers are ubiquitous, occurring in many electronic devices in everyday life. Central heating controllers uses PID, as does the cruise control on a car.

PID is an acronym and refers to three different calculations the controller performs on the error in the feedback loop. It adds the results of these calculations together to determine the appropriate power to apply.

- P - Proportional calculation. The higher the error, the more the power to the elements is changed. However, using this calculation by itself means the temperature takes quite a while to get to the target, and there will always be a small error remaining. Proportional control effectively uses the error value "now" to decide on its power contribution.
- I - Integral calculation. The longer an error persists, the more the power to the elements is changed. So if the kiln temperature is taking a long time to reach the target, more or less power is steadily applied to get it there. This shortens the time it takes the kiln to get to its target, but unfortunately, can mean the kiln temperature overshoots. Integral control effectively uses the history of the error value to decide on its power contribution.
- D - Derivative calculation. The faster the kiln temperature is changing, the less the power to the elements is changed. This works against the P and I calculations, slowing down the temperature change a little to avoid overshoot. Derivative control effectively tries to predict the error value in the future to decide on its power contribution.

The three PID elements are added together in different proportions. Most of the power to the elements comes from the P calculation, with smaller amounts from I and D. The relative amounts of power from each depend on the device being controlled and its dynamic behaviour, and are set by the kiln manufacturer in a process called "tuning" the PID controller. Getting the tuning correct is vitally important for the kiln's performance. Tuning aims to optimise the rise time, the overshoot, the settling time and the accuracy for a given application. My controller allows the owner to change the tuning, but that would not be wise. If you get it wrong, the kiln could become "unstable'. For example, it could never settle to the target temperature but instead keep increasing and decreasing in temperature with wild oscillations until it can't get any hotter. Not a good idea!

For more detailed information on PID controllers see Wikipedia's article "Proportional–integral–derivative controller". It is quite mathematical in places but does discuss the history of PID controllers. If you go to the section "Manual Tuning", there is an animated image showing the effect of adding different proportions of the three PID components for a step change in the target.

Whilst a programmable controller is undoubtedly a great boon for firing an electric kiln, it's worth remembering that what really matters when firing ceramics is heat-work. The amount of heat-work depends both on the temperature and the time for which the temperature is applied. So, for example, soaking at the end of a firing can affect the glaze quality considerably. Heat-work can be measured using pyrometric cones, which are made from mixtures of ceramic materials, and designed to melt at particular temperatures, or actually, after a given amount of heat-work, so mimicking what happens in a glaze. There is a complete range of cones, numbered non-intuitively from "Cone 022", which bends at about 600ºC, to "Cone 15", bending at about 1430ºC. Bisque firings for studio pottery are typically to between 940 and 1000ºC (Cone 09 to Cone 06). High-fired stoneware and porcelain fire up to between Cone 8 and Cone 10 (around 1300ºC), perhaps higher in long firings in wood kilns.

Glaze results are usually compared by cone number, so it's important to make sure your kiln is properly calibrated for heat-work. Depending on the configuration of the elements in your kiln, there could be a cone or more's difference in heat-work between the shelves, so glaze results can vary considerably from shelf to shelf. My small front-loading kiln is much cooler at the bottom than the top. This is where soaking at the final temperature can be useful, as it can help to even out the variations across the kiln. Small kilns and older kilns can also take much longer to reach the top temperature, which impacts the amount of heat-work. For example, an Orton Cone 10 will bend at 1285ºC when fired at 60ºC per hour, and 1305ºC when fired at 150ºC per hour. The soak time will also affect this. So if your glaze requires Cone 10, and your kiln fires at a slower rate for the top 200 degrees or so, the temperature you set into your programmer needs to change.

So it's important to measure how your kiln operates by regularly using cones on each of the shelves. You can then determine what temperature to program for the results you want. For example, I had a small kiln that was consistently over-firing when relying on temperature measurement alone. The thermocouple was correctly calibrated, so the temperature measurement was accurate, but the time over the last 200 degrees was extended, hence the over-firing. Using cones showed that setting the final temperature about 30 degrees below the aiming point gave the correct cone bend.

~Paul Ostro and John Masterton

References

Proportional–integral–derivative controller. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proportional%E2%80%93integral%E2%80%93derivative_controller

Firing Schedules on DigitalFire website. https://digitalfire.com/glossary/firing+schedule

Ceramics at the Asian Civilisations Museum

AP Member Nuala Garnsey sent these great photos taken by her son of Southeast Asian pottery in the Asian Civilisations Museum, Singapore. Some beautiful and inspiring shapes, decoration and glazes here.

ACM is Singapore's national museum of Asian antiquities. It focuses on the many historical connections between cultures and civilisations in Asia, and between Asia and the rest of the world.

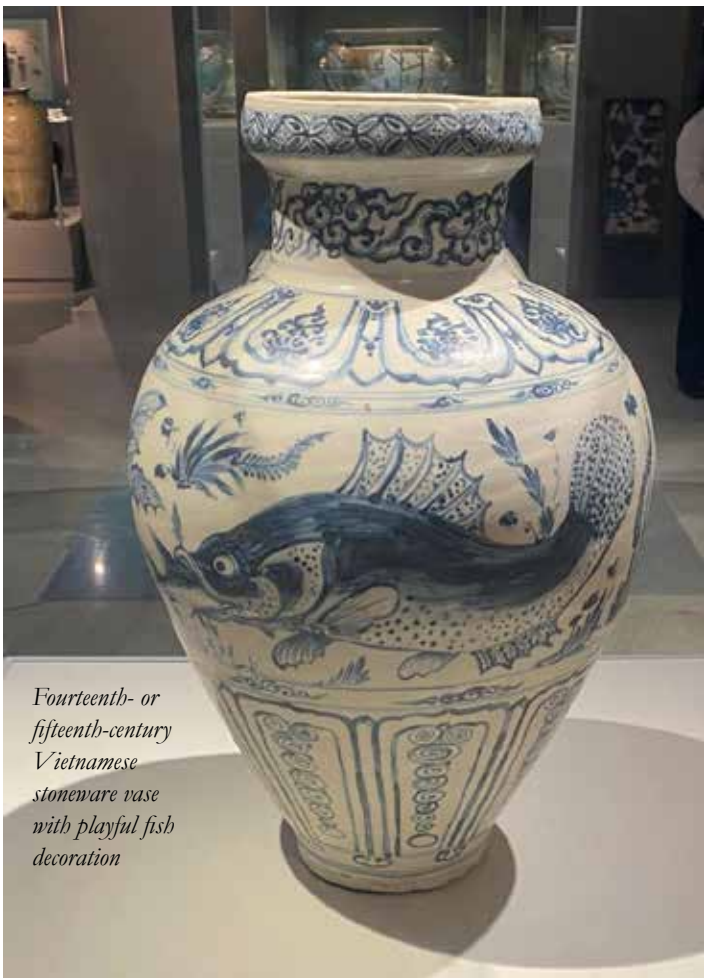
Fifteenth-century decorated stoneware vessels from Thailand

Twelfth- to fifteenth-century Vietnamese figures and vessels

Large glazed storage vessels with applied decoration

A fourteenth-century Chinese vessel recovered from the Tamasek Wreck. The darker streaks in the blue decoration are the result of the early artisans being unable to control the amount of iron in the cobalt blue pigment

Photos: Eduard Garnsey



Fourteenth- or fifteenth-century Vietnamese stoneware vase with playful fish decoration

Autumn Raku Day

As Autumn set in, six members of Anglian Potters met for a raku day [1]. Frank Logan and Martin George were our experts for the session and handled the kilns and firings. My first experience of raku was at a workshop (that Joy Voisey organised) the previous year. In that first session, Martin and Frank talked about various raku techniques, history of raku, and some things that we could try with different glazes and reductions.

This year we were going to experiment with naked raku. Frank suggested using Ashraf Hanna clay as it is white with fine grog, can withstand thermal shock and gives good colours. In preparation for the day, we made a mix of pots with different shapes (many slab built) so as to have a variety of surfaces to experiment on. Some of our

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Photos 1, 3, 11: Philippe Robin

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pieces were burnished to remove the rough feel of the grog and also to give an initial shine before bisque firing. All of them survived the bisque firing. A couple of my slab pieces had minute cracks at the joints, but I hoped that they could survive raku firing.

We were then all set for the day. Fortunately, it was dry and relatively mild, given that it was late October. Frank brought two kilns. The larger one – a reclaimed oil barrel lined with insulating fibre – was able to take four or five pots at a time. After setting up, we made sure that everything was safe and that we could move around the kilns without tripping over any tools (or pots)!

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The table set up on the lawn housed all the glazes supplied by Frank, who wanted us to try his new white crackle glaze [2, 3]. There was a mix of blues and greens that we could apply depending on the effect that we hoped for. In readiness for the firing, our pots were placed on top of the warming kiln to dry the glaze to help reduce thermal shock when firing [4]. Each firing took about 20 to 25 minutes [5]. As our pots reached temperature we were able to choose what effect we were looking for. We could either do reduction by putting the pots on sand, placed on strips of paper then covered with an upturned tin to exclude oxygen [6] (and get a metallic effect) or just covered with newspaper to retain the initial colour of the glaze. Frank suggested using newspaper instead of sawdust as the latter gives off an acrid smoke and can create an uneven surface when the glaze is still fluid. It is fascinating to see how the copper effects and colours came out on some of the pots [7, 8], the contrast between smoke effect and glazes on others [9] and how the glazes produced different effects with uneven surfaces.

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We then moved on to experimenting with horsehair on naked pots, which was great fun. Once the kiln reached the right temperature (~600ºC), each pot was then transferred onto a clean surface where we could manipulate them and apply horsehair. It was fascinating to see the horsehair curl and burn on contact with the pots leaving black squiggles (carbon produced from burning the hair). One of us would hold and turn the pot whilst another person would put the horsehair on [10]. We could not really control the exact patterns but could vary the quantity of hairs used. We had to act quite fast as the temperature of the pots quickly went down. It was exciting to see the result as hairs transformed into smoke, the result on the burnished surfaces producing lovely abstract patterns [11]. After doing the first pots we got a better feel of how to manipulate each piece with tongs and apply hairs to produce clearer patterns.

The day went far too quickly. We did several firings but still ended up with some pots left. Then it was time to clear up. I think everyone enjoyed the day. It was good to share experiences. Everyone brought food to share – for lunch and teatime, and our generous hostess provided tea, coffee, etc. (among many other things – like her beautiful garden). It was a day full of camaraderie and fun. We enjoyed looking at how everybody's pieces came out and shared the thrill of anticipation [12].


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Photos 2, 4–10, 12: Chris Dommett


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A big "Thank you" to Frank and Martin for their hard work and sharing their knowledge and experience – as Frank says: "every day is a school day", and we all learnt a lot! Thanks also to Chris Dommett for providing some of the pictures. Finally, huge thanks to Joy for organising and hosting the workshop. It was lovely to sit in her beautiful garden whilst enjoying cakes, refreshments and excellent company. Here's to next time.

~Philippe Robin

Liz Bewley Ceramics – A Potter's Profile

Photos: Liz Bewley

I am a ceramicist based in rural Kent. I have always been interested in mythology, legends, folklore, circus and dance. My work explores these themes.

My characters, whether mermaids (who I feel embody the wild woman archetype) or minotaurs, are cheeky, fun, flirty, feminine, strong, independent, confident, unapologetic and gloriously unashamed of their bodies!

I have no formal art training, but I have always enjoyed art in many forms. The benefit of growing up in London was that there were plenty of galleries to just go and wander around. For a school art project a friend and I took ourselves off to the Natural History Museum to sketch the skeletons of birds' wings to make our "Little Ic(arus)" in wire with plaster and bandage to show the dripping wax.

I enjoyed art at school but was steered towards academic subjects over creative ones. However, I did get to try a number of arts subjects, including ceramics, and a seed was planted. Before I knew it, it was 2013, and despite a brief encounter with a potter's wheel as part of my 40th birthday celebrations, I was still trying to find a way to explore my creative side.

The universe delivered in the form of a five-day course in my local town: "Handbuilding animals and people in Clay", run by the amazing Marie Prett at the Singing Soul Gallery. During that week I learnt various techniques: slab, coil and pinch-pot. By the end of the week I had created several pieces of work: a bust, a standing cat, a sitting hare and a mermaid with impossibly squiggly hair. It was thanks to Marie having a shelf of "student work for sale" in the gallery that I sold my first piece of work. The bug took hold, I bought a bag of clay and a few tools and started making practice heads at home. A decade and hundreds of practice heads later . . .

I am now lucky enough to have a studio at the bottom of the garden and a kiln of my own. My work is currently on sale in several local galleries, including Ethel Loves in Rye and Greenfinch Gallery in Ticehurst. In 2024 I hope to take my work further afield to more ceramic shows and I am developing a couple of themes around which I am making bodies of work for 2024.

I like there to be a tangible connection, interaction or sense of communication between the pieces I make with two or more figures, for instance whales or turtles with mermaids. I believe all living things are connected, it is our forgetting of this that causes humans to act in a way that is not sustainable and fails to take into account the impact of our actions on animals, plants and the planet.

People often tell me that my creations capture an attitude or expression. I love it when someone interprets a sense of the personality of a piece or what they might've been thinking. A recent studio visitor originally from China told me how prevalent body-shaming of women and girls was there, and they loved the freedom my work made them feel.

I've found I can sometimes think myself out of things, but clay has shown me that try and try again is the best approach, and practice really is the way through. Above all, I enjoy the process of seeing who wants to emerge from the clay, and, I suppose, my mind.

I hope you can feel the joy I get from creating these pieces, which are, after all, meant to be fun and make you smile.

~ Liz Bewley

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Andrew Pearson – Demonstration Day

On 26 November 2023, we had a very interesting demonstration at Mumford by Andrew Pearson of Stone Monkey Ceramics. During his morning slide presentation and his afternoon practical demonstration we learnt a variety of fascinating details about not only his pottery experience, but also about the Japanese art of bonsai.

The inspiration for Stone Monkey Ceramics came from his being born in the Chinese year of the monkey and his elemental sign for that year being Earth. He put the two together one day at in Leicester Square Tube station where he was working for Transport for London, and thus, his now-thriving business was born.

Bonsai ceramics form the backbone of Andrew's repertoire, and it is a form he associates closely with. In fact, Andrew is currently one of Europe's most highly regarded bonsai potters. He is, to date, the only Western bonsai potter to have been invited to, and entered, one of Japan's major exhibitions.

In January 2015, he placed two entries, a glazed trio and an unglazed trio of pots, into the 10th Annual Modern Shohin (i.e. "small") Container Artist Exhibition at the 40th Gafu-Ten exhibition in Kyoto, the largest and most prestigious small-size (under 25 cm) bonsai exhibition in Japan, and probably the world. Not only was he the first gaijin (outsider, non-Japanese) to enter, but his unglazed entry took the Gold Award!

His interest in pots first started in 1993 with bonsai itself – the art of modifying the shape of a tree and growing it in a container. This art, in which the pot is an intrinsic part of the finished image, is derived from an ancient Chinese horticultural practice, part of which was then redeveloped under the influence of Japanese Zen Buddhism.

Photos: Trudy Staines

The Japanese write bonsai with two kanji, the first meaning pot and the second meaning planting/tree.

One without the other is not bonsai. Bonsai is all about the illusion of making the tree look bigger than it is, therefore the proportions of the pot in which the tree sits are an essential part of the finished image.

A classic bonsai pot is one made of ceramic or porcelain that has been fired to stoneware temperatures, so that it does not absorb or hold any water within the material. This is important for the health of the trees.

The more Andrew became interested in bonsai, the more difficult he felt it was to find pots that would have the right qualities for the trees he wanted to plant, and that would satisfy him fully.

Andrew explained that trees in the Japanese art of bonsai are divided into masculine or feminine, depending on their type and characteristics. Those with a thick trunk, dense branches, dead wood and a strong canopy are considered more masculine; those that are graceful, curvy, with sparse branches and a smooth bark are considered feminine. Often they have a mixture of these

characteristics, and a good bonsai artist must be able to determine which one is predominant.

The general rule is that the shape of the tree and the pot together, must be harmonious, and to achieve this, one must consider adjusting for the degree of femininity or masculinity, the size, variety, season in which the bonsai is viewed or judged, and the material, shape, colour, glaze and décor of rim and feet of the pot.

Andrew explained how it is traditional to associate red unglazed clay with conifers, and coloured glazes with deciduous trees, which are typically shown when in bloom or with characteristically colourful leaves. The same tree could require a different pot according to which season it is being shown in. A hawthorn, for instance, changes colour up to five times in a year, depending on whether it is naked, has young, light-coloured leaves, or darker, more mature ones, is in flower, or is bearing berries.

We also learnt that there are precise guidelines for the proportions of a bonsai pot. For instance, the height of the pot should be the same as the width of the trunk above the surface roots (called nebari). For an oval or a rectangular pot, the width of the pot should be about two thirds of the height of the tree, but for round or square-shaped pots, that width should come down to one third of the height of the tree, and if the foliage is unusually large then the pot becomes accordingly wider, and one must compensate by lowering the height of the pot. To complicate matters, these guideline can change depending on the type of tree: if they have rapidly growing roots, for instance, or are flowering or fruit trees, they will need deeper pots.

So the pot design should match the type of tree to create the harmony required in bonsai, and the potter making for the bonsai market must consider which shape is the best match for which type of tree: concave? convex? angular, hexagonal, oval, rectangular?

An experienced bonsai lover will, in time, develop a gut feeling about all this.

The feet can also play an important part in the design process as they can elevate the pot or make it more grounded. Feet can be flush with the sides of the pot or set back, they can be applied, or be carved cloud feet, and be central or corner feet. Andrew sometimes throws feet using a profile cut out from a credit card as a thin "ring" which he then cuts with a wire to divide it in sections before applying to the bottom of the pot. He also often uses "fake feet" (i.e. just clay loosely applied in strategic positions) to the bottom of his wide pots to avoid any potential sagging in the middle. Andrew uses silver sand instead of batwash on his shelves when firing to allow for free movement of the shrinking clay.

But how did Andrew progress from bonsai lover to bonsai potter? He told us that as his knowledge of bonsai grew, so too did his need to find the "perfect pot". Then, in 1998, his wife suggested they take up ceramics classes together as she had enjoyed them in school. Andrew

took the plunge and joined her on her ceramic evening classes (taught by our very own Trudy Staines!) and loved it, of course! After that he went on to do a course with Deborah Baynes – another esteemed Anglian Potter and experienced teacher and, as was to be expected, he got the "clay bug".

As Andrew got more involved, he purchased a small electric kiln and began making pots for his own enjoyment. Soon members of his local bonsai club began

asking him to make pots for their trees, and he also started selling to a local bonsai nursery.

Andrew gained a lot of his inspiration from other great potters, which drove him to search for his own individual style. However, Japanese ceramics always had, and still do have, a huge influence on his work. Over the years Andrew has attended several courses at colleges and universities in his quest to improve both his throwing skills and his understanding of glaze chemistry and formulation.

In the early part of 2003 Andrew purchased a potter's wheel and a 9 cubic foot gas kiln. Again, there was another learning curve with new glaze recipes and reduction firing.

Eventually he progressed enough to sell his bonsai ceramics all over Europe via shows and from his website under the name Stone Monkey Ceramics.

Andrew's interest in studio ceramics has also led him to deviate from the field of bonsai ceramics onto a different but complementary journey. Andrew is an avid fan of the "Leach Tradition" as this stemmed from the Japanese ethos of producing pottery, which he tries to portray in his work. Andrew loves subtle lines and quiet forms; the ceramic pieces he creates must have "Wabi-Sabi" – beauty in imperfection.

Andrew likes to think that his ceramics have a voice and are an extension of himself, embodying a little of his love of freedom, spirit and life. I certainly agree with him!

Most of his forms are thrown or extruded, then altered, or formed with slabs, depending on the final shape he desires, and most of the time he has a particular type of tree in mind when he's making a pot. As most of his thrown pots are wide and low, Andrew prefers to throw on bats, which make removal from the wheelhead easier.

He often throws his bottoms intentionally thick in order to have enough clay to turn a deep foot ring, which he can then cut and alter to create the pot's feet. Alternatively, he attaches special "cloud" feet he has designed in the traditional Japanese fashion.

Thrown pots are turned when leather hard directly on the bat. His favourite kidneys are from Mudtools as the different colours for different stiffnesses make them easy to identify. He told us how tap centring was "the best thing" he ever learned and how he feels it is particularly important to pay attention to detail to all parts of his process.

Andrew uses a foam bat marked with regularly spaced lines that has the double purpose of protecting the pot while he works on it, and helping him to carve the feet, or place the sculpted ones at regular intervals. He often uses round hole cutters to trim the curves of his feet from the deep foot ring he has turned.

His first pots were fired to 1180°C, but he now fires to cone 6 stoneware – 1240°C. Indeed, one of the clay bodies he likes to use is a grogged terracotta he gets from The Clay Cellar in Kent, which has a 10–12% shrinkage and which is supposed to only go up to 1180°C, but he now takes it to 1240°C without problems.

The finished pots have biggish, bevelled (that attention to detail again!) holes at the bottom, which once in use will be covered with mesh to retail the soil, and are indispensable to ensure free water flow, and smaller holes to secure either the copper or aluminium wire that will secure the trees in place.

The soil most commonly used in bonsai is called Akadama, mixed in Japan from volcanic soil. Nanban pots (the term means "southern barbarian", since it is thought they might originate from Taiwan, or possibly Korea) were briefly discussed. These are often curvy, shallow, bowl-like forms, and some say that traditionally they were made using upside down pig feed bucket lids as formers, although there are several unconfirmed different hypotheses on their origin. They are often unglazed, often have no feet, and are associated with "feminine" trees.

Another art akin to bonsai is the Chinese penjing, which is more free-flowing and flamboyant, incorporating animal shapes and often very colourful glazing.

Bonsai trees are often displayed with kusamono, an arrangement of grasses and flowers that follow the seasons and are meant to enhance the beauty of the

bonsai, although it has also now become an art in itself.

Andrew gave us a demonstration of how he makes his oval shaped pots. He started by throwing about four and a half pounds of Valentine's ES40 clay (which he uses for glazed pots) to the height he needed without a base. For the demonstration he dried this with a heat gun to a point he could manipulate it without distorting it. Usually he would allow it to dry naturally to this point. He then formed it into an oval shape and positioned it onto a prepared slab. He then marked points on both the wall and slab to register the exact position before removing the wall to carefully score and slip before reattaching it to the slab. Good joints are essential to minimise loss in the firing. He then filled the pot with a foam form to minimise the chance of the bottom sagging when flipping it onto a bat to work on the feet.

Andrew's angular pots are mostly made with slabs, altered to achieve the shapes he wants, then enhanced with sprigs and decorations, such as his characteristic little half spheres, which he creates with a beautifully crafted mahogany and metal tool (*left*) made by a friend, his flowers (as in the pots that won Gold in Kyoto) or the traditional decoration called mushikui (meaning moth eaten) which is carved into the surface of the pot and enhanced with iron oxide, or a combination of these.

He often uses metal oxides applied at bisque to enhance his pots. A good example of this was a pot made using the beautiful pattern of weathered wood from an old Viking lodge where he went as part of one of the Triskele Group trips (more about this later). Some of his pots are decorated with underglazes and not glazed, as he likes the matt look he can achieve with this technique.

He mentioned that his hexagonal slab-built pots' sides are bevelled at 60° using a bevelling tool on the side and bottom edges, then the bottom is added while the sides are upside down, and lastly the rim, which is another slab-built shape.

Andrew told us he is very careful to dry his pots thoroughly, but still always candles before bisque firing, which he does with a ramp of 60°C/hour up to 600°C, then 150°C/hour up to 980°C. His glaze firing is a simple 150°C/hour ramp up to Cone 6.

In 2016, Andrew and two incredibly talented potter friends, Tom Benda of Sansai Bonsai Pots in the Czech Republic, and Thor Holvila of Holvila Bonsai Pots from Göteborg in Sweden, decided to create Triskele, a collaborative potters' group. The trio met in Belgium and funded their first trip to Sweden by auctioning pots they had made collaboratively by exchanging leather hard pots made by each of them individually, which were then altered and finished by another one of the three in the group.

The friends now aim to meet up in a different country every year to make an edition of just a few pots together, which will be named and stamped after the country they choose to work in. Each pot body is made by one of the potters, then another of the group adds feet, details and glaze finishes. The pots bear the Triskele stamp, in addition to the stamps of the two specific potters involved.

This series of collaborations through the years has proven very successful and enjoyable for the three friends, who have visited each other's countries as well as the USA, and plan a trip to Spain for 2024. As well as this type of collaborative project, they like to take inspiration from each other's experience and from the landscapes they get to visit when together. Apparently it's not unusual for them to be potting at 4 a.m. in their PJs!

Andrew also told us about his trip to Portland, Oregon, where he also worked collaboratively on pots and had his first taste of wood firing, which he much enjoyed and intends to explore further.

Andrew plans to retire from TfL in November 2024 and pot full time after that. You can follow his work on:

Instagram: @stonemonkey1968

Facebook: Stonemonkey Ceramics

YouTube: Andrew Pearson

For more information visit www.stonemonkeyceramics.co.uk

If you are inspired to have a go at bonsai, Kaizen Bonsai (https://www.kaizenbonsai.com) in Great Yarmouth is a specialist nursery selling raw materials, tools and pots for bonsai, and Banksia Bonsai, based in Wisbech is another supplier Andrew recommends.

We also had a chance during lunchtime, as is usual, to admire and purchase some of Andrew's beautiful pots, and display some of ours. All in all a splendid day was had by everyone, and I am sure we are all very grateful to Trudy for yet again organising a marvellous demo day, and to all the helpers who have contributed to the successful set up and clearing away, as well as the lovely lunch spread, and most of all to Andrew for the variety of interesting information about the complex art of bonsai and the intricacies of the very specific pot characteristics required for a successful bonsai. We all learnt a lot!

~Robi Bateman

Salt and Soda Firing at Shotley

Back in October, several of us gathered at Jerry Finlayson's place in Shotley to do some salt and soda firing. A core group of stalwart members have been working on the two kilns, one for salt and one for soda, keeping them repaired and maintained, so we were keen to see how they would perform. It had been a while since the kilns were last fired, so there was plenty of preliminary work to do. The first job was a bit of gardening, clearing paths to the kilns and the loo and generally tidying up around the glaze and working areas. Then we cleaned up and batwashed the kiln shelves and sorted out and stirred up the glazes and slips. By the end of the first day we had more or less glazed all the bisque-fired pots we had brought with us. Day two was all about wadding the glazed pots (sticking small pads of refractory material to the bottom of the pots to raise them up above the shelves so the circulating vapours can get to the bases) and packing the kilns. Packing is a skilled job, placing the pots as efficiently as possible, all the time thinking about where the salt and soda comes into the kilns and how it will circulate and where the kilns will be hottest and coolest. This done, Nicki, Paddy and Jerry were up at sparrowfart the next morning to get the propane gas kilns lit and the firings underway. Once the kilns reached the required temperature people took it in turns to pour in salt and inject soda. The duration of the firings was determined by monitoring the detailed temperature records being kept and judging the progress of the firings using kiln rings. Then it was just a matter of waiting for the kilns to cool down. A few days later several of us returned for the unpacking. Everyone was delighted to find both firings had been very successful. Huge thanks to Jerry, Nicki and all involved for a fantastic event. Here are a few photos of our efforts and one or two personal impressions of the three days.

The soda kiln, propane bottles and some of the slip and glaze buckets.

Photos: Nicki Darrell and Catherine Wynne-Powell

Cleaning and batwashing the kiln shelves

Glazed pots waiting to be fired

Loading the soda kiln

An impressive haul!

I really enjoyed my three days at Shotley, getting introduced to the processes of soda and salt firing. Over my time spent helping with others, the kilns were repaired and made ready for firing. Pots were glazed, wadding applied, and the kilns packed. Throughout my stay there were numerous conversations and workshops covering anything from a technical nature to practical experiences and demonstrations. I glazed my slab-built pots with areas of orange slip and tenmoku glaze. They emerged from the soda kiln with a sort of architectural finish that I will further explore next time.

~Russell Moreton

The salt kiln partially loaded. We got a lot in there!

Loading the salt kiln. It's a tough job, but someone has to do it!

Let the firing commence!

Pouring in the salt

I have only had the opportunity to be involved in a soda/salt firing once before, this was at Potters' Camp several years ago. I'd enjoyed the experience but not thought much more about it until an email popped into my inbox with the chance to go to Shotley and participate in four days of firing. *Why not?* I thought, and luckily I had some bisque-fired pots left over from a raku course. So I signed up and headed to a rather soggy field, which I vaguely remembered from Camp. It was great fun and there was so much opportunity to get involved with all aspects of the process – cleaning and prepping kilns, checking glazes, adding in the salt/soda and checking temp. I really felt I learnt a lot and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Thanks to Nicki and the team for the inclusivity and deep knowledge and willingness to let amateurs have a go. I was very pleased with the results.

~Karen Marshall

Attending the Shotley salt and soda firing was my first Anglian Potters event. At short notice, I could only gather odd bits of bisqueware left in my shed, but knowing I was simply there to connect with potters and discover new techniques, I wasn't too bothered. Hearing entertaining stories about old camps and previous firing escapades kept us going as we cleared areas around the kiln. This was an ideal chance for me to ask questions and gather wisdom from the "wise ones"! It only consolidated my view that potters are the most generous of artisans. I reckon it's the clay that does the magic, and the long-time members certainly shared some great spells using those flames! There was much discussion over the glaze recipes, and the effects that had come before, and I learned so much about the methods. I was so grateful to have a go at spraying salt/soda, adding my own sorcery to the process. Seeing and taking part in each process was brilliant; Liz and Nicki's chemistry knowledge helped at every step. From altering the refractory wadding mix to determining the best angle to spray the soda. Whilst my own results were a bit hit and miss, I'm looking forward to further attempts and more Anglian Potters adventures as I make my way back into the clay world.

~Catherine Wynne-Powell

Above: Some great results opening the kiln from the salt firing.

Left: Spraying in the soda solution.

New Event! Summer Demonstration Day with Ellen Rijsdorp

As events organiser I am delighted to announce that international ceramicist Ellen Rijsdorp from the Netherlands will be doing a demonstration for us in **Mundford on 16th June**. As many of you are aware, our demonstration days are usually held during the winter months as historically many potters are busy doing shows in the summer.

However, I was delighted when Ellen Rijsdorp contacted me about doing a demonstration in the summer as she will be in the UK at that time. We had tried in the past to organise a date, but due to her living in the Netherlands this had proved difficult.

Ellen says of her work: "My ceramic objects are inspired by natural structures, such as sand dunes, ice crystals, wood, rocks and leaves. Structures that I find and see at home and travelling. The objects have large, increasingly convex surfaces, accentuated with small texture elements: highly structured and chaotic at the same time. The resulting balance between plan and chance is contained by a subtle framework that controls it. The balanced colours harmonise with the shape."

For more information visit: www.ellenrijsdorp.nl

I am also pleased to confirm the following demonstrations at Mundford.

Ellen Rijsdorp

Sunday 19th May 2024 AGM Vivienne Burns

Vivienne Burns works in black clay, which is painted with slips and underglazes. This colour provides a background for sgraffito, stencilling and printing..

Sunday 6th October 2024 Anthony Dix NOTE NEW DATE

Tony Dix makes wheel-thrown and altered soda-fired pots.

Sunday 3rd November 2024 Paul Smith

Paul Smith makes bold, semi-abstract figurative sculptures.

Photo: Paul Smith

Paul Smith

Photo: Tony Dix

Tony Dix

Photos and text: Trudy Staines

Vivienne Burns

CamCRAG Art Event

CamCRAG (a Cambridge-based charity involved with helping refugees) is planning an art event on 22 June 2024 during Refugee Week. They are looking for between 10 and 12 artists who would be interested in participating in the event. Each artist will be asked to pay approximately £50 for a table, with all the money from any sales going directly to the artist. The event will probably take place between 11.00 a.m. and 4.00 p.m. Setting up will be from 9.00 a.m. or, if possible, the evening before the event. The likely venue for the event is the Alison Richard Building on the Sidgwick Site. The sale of work will be followed by a performance of *Amor Mundi – Before and After*, inspired by Hannah Arendt's journey as a refugee, a classical Greek thinking on the interplay of politics and performance and contemporary realities.

https://www.humanmovement.cam.ac.uk/events/refugee-week-amor-mundi

Please note this is still at planning stage and, for the moment, CamCRAG is asking for expressions of interest only. If you would like to put your name forward, please email Diana Kazemi at dianakazemi@hotmail.com

A Modern Exploration of a Clarice Cliff Tea Set

Photos: *June Gentle*

My pottery journey started in the days of homage to Leach and Hamada and the studio pottery tradition. Glazes were admired for their natural subtlety and depth, made up to recipes and passed on from the iconic potters of the time. In the 1980s, a visit to the Craftsmen Potters Shop in London was quite a shock to me, as I saw a very different array of brightly glazed pottery. Since then, the potters' palette has widened with glaze development from ceramic manufacturers, and as we now delight in endless variety, our tastes have become more eclectic.

Years ago my mother offered my daughters a set of cups and saucers from an old box in her garage with which to play tea parties. This little coffee set looked very strange to me; in colour and form it was quite quirky [1]. Later, I discovered that the design was called "Bizarre" and had been designed by Clarice Cliff at the Newport Pottery in the early 20th century. The shapes and forms of the ware fascinated me; they were so unlike the day's functional ware, and yet exuberant and joyous.

Recently I began researching the ware made by the Newport factory, where pots were made on an industrial scale by mould and slip casting, with decoration often done by hand. One name came to the fore and became synonymous with the pots made and designed at that time – Clarice Cliff, whose interesting story was of a woman designer/potter in a man's world.

Clarice was born in January 1899 in Tunstall, Staffs, Britain's premier pottery-producing region. Hers was a working-class family and she had seven younger siblings. Clarice showed an interest in drawing and enjoyed clay modelling at school. After school she would often visit an aunt, who was in charge of the Alfred Meakins factory decorating shop. At the age of 13, Clarice began work in a pottery factory training as a gilder and freehand enamelling painter, earning a shilling for a five and a half day week. Her parents encouraged her to continue clay modelling and painting and paid for her to attend evening classes at the Tunstall School of Art.

During the following year, as the First World War caused a shortage of workers, an opportunity arose in the decorating department at the A. J. Wilkinson factory in Middleport. This offered better prospects as they were expanding their sales. The new directors were brothers Colley and Guy Shorter. The manager, Jack Walker, recognised that Clarice was a talented girl from a poor

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family and took her under his wing in the lithography department. Clarice made the most of the opportunities to wander around the factory in her lunch breaks and learn about the various technical processes.

Women were usually employed as decorative painters, as they showed a natural facility with a brush. Clarice was given a free hand by her boss to invent designs for a load of old bisqueware that had been inherited with the factory. The highly coloured ware she designed became popular and Clarice was given her own design studio and more freedom to invent new themes. The ceramics started to sell well in London stores; they were everyday

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ware to brighten up the home. People were ready for exuberance and colour after the grim start to the 20th century. Clarice then began training her own girls in decorating techniques.

Some of her designs seem overblown and almost outrageously colourful to our present-day taste, but she explored widely, adding motifs from India and other cultures. Some decoration was more homely, such as the "Crocuses" pattern, and in others she simplified landscapes of cottages in the woods, trees and flowers into simple line drawings. Generally, the "Bizarre" ware used fluted shapes instead of traditional round ones, slip cast not thrown. Strap handles, triangular handles and plinth-like bases also featured, echoes of jazzy saxophones, maybe? Colours were based around red, yellow, orange and black, getting increasingly colourful as new motifs were designed.

I tried to work out why the design of my particular simple coffee set were so evocative of its time – the era of Art Deco and Jazz. The obvious ones are the use of fluted and triangular forms, slip cast and with lined out rims, using a narrow palette of yellow, red and black, with a honey glaze.

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I thought I would try taking some of these elements and incorporating them into my own work to see if I could produce some merging of styles. I did not want to enter the slip-cast world as I am essentially a thrower and handbuilder but I wanted the work to be thin and to use some of the core Art Deco shapes and decorative techniques. I therefore decided on a hybrid method – basically thrown and altered shapes for bowls and cups, and cylinders of rollered clay sheets for tall jugs with some added throwing [2]. Precision hand-lining I discovered was a great skill and required a steady hand (which I had not!). I salute the "lady" painters of those times.

My little project on hybrid Art Deco pots finally consisted of some small coffee cans [3] with triangular handles, small bowls using the signature triangular bases [4 and 5] and cylindrical jugs with strap handles [2]. I introduced colour using stains, keeping with what I felt were the original colours of the Art Deco period: yellow, red, orange, blue and black. I fired to 1220ºC and used a clear semi-matt glaze overall.

This new project was time consuming compared with original industrial techniques, but having recently stepped back into making and firing stoneware, using glaze stains and engobes, after years spent years making raku pots, it was an interesting exercise in looking closely at design processes. It really showed me how colours can "sing" together. It has stimulated me to look at some new ways of designing and making new work [6].

~June Gentle

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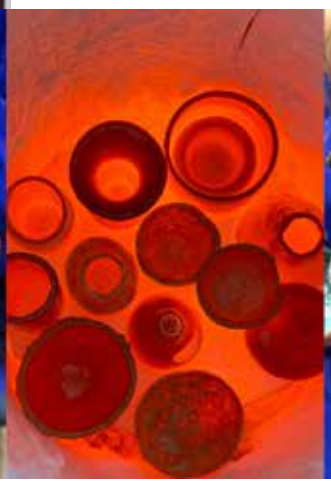

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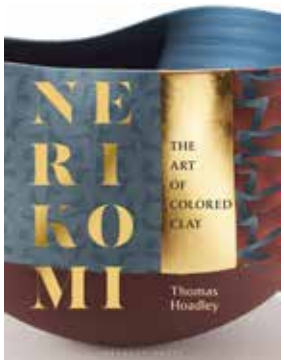

Nerikomi, The Art of Colored Clay **by Thomas Hoadley**

Thomas Hoadley is an America-based potter specialising in coloured clay and the nerikomi technique. He starts with explaining the definitions and differences between the myriad coloured clay techniques and terminology. He then gives an in-depth history of the origins and evolution of nerikomi throughout the world, from 1500 BCE China from where it likely spread along the Silk Road, then describing its evolution to the modern day.

The book discusses over 30 artists, their influences and techniques, including a section dedicated to the most renowned and celebrated Japanese masters. This is one of the most detailed books I have read on the nerikomi technique, featuring many artists with examples of how they achieve this distinct aesthetic.

While the book is bursting with detailed, colourful photos and fascinating stories to get your creative juices flowing, the nerikomi techniques used in this book are not for novices, and it's not focused on instructions for the beginner looking to dip their toe in the nerikomi

Photo: © Hans Munck Andersen

Photo: © Narumi Ii

world. However, once you have a good base knowledge of pottery techniques and colouring clay, there's no end to what you can achieve with inspiration from this book. Whether you throw, slab, pinch or coil, there will be a nerikomi technique for you. This book brings a much-needed spotlight on the rare, but fascinating specialism of coloured clay through examples from a wide selection of potters, and showcases the near infinite possibilities in this fantastic and under-appreciated medium.

~Sheila Madder

For 20% off, visit www.bloomsbury.com/uk/nerikomi and enter code **Nerikomi** at checkout.

Offer valid until 30th April 2024.

Nerikomi, The Art of Colored Clay Thomas Hoadley.
Herbert Press
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info@denisebrownceramics.co.uk

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Diary Dates

Wayne Clark
Mundford 3 March 2024
Vivienne Burns
Anglian Potters AGM
Mundford, 19 May 2024
Ellen Rijsdorp
Mundford 16 June 2024
Tony Dix
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Institution £50 for a college or workshop – half year* £27 (details from the Membership Secretary)

Student £10 for full-time ceramics students – proof of status is required

**Half year rates only for new members*

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