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EDITORIAL

- Welcome to the latest version of our triannual newsletter, February, June and October.
- Thanks to all of the contributors. Please continue to send in your news of future events in addition to their distribution via the usual e-mail channel. The newsletter is a handy place to store and find this news, and as it can also be read by non-members it may increase your audience/customers.

Neil Dewey

Group Update

CHAIR'S LETTER

Well winter has certainly ended with a flourish. From the sounds of it on social media most members have been hugely busy – making, exhibiting, selling, meeting up and just generally making up for lost time!

Thinking back to what we (the SCG committee) have been doing since the last newsletter – I don't know where to start! Here are a few of the things anyway:

- Cabby Luxford had another successful demo with Adrian Bates in March which I know from comments that many people enjoyed very much.
- We had a good zoom AGM in March – reasonably well attended (and just about quorate too!).
- Alec Roberts organised a really successful fund raising sale of pieces donated by SCG members at the Chichester Cathedral Shop – and raised £833 for the Turkey/Syria earthquake appeal
- Lynn Nicholls has organised a group of SCG members to exhibit at Handmade Oxford at Waterperry Gardens in June. I know everyone involved is quite frantically making stuff for the event. And Lynn and I have been planning – and literally building - the infrastructure to support it.
- We had the Alternative Firings Day we have been talking about, on May Day at my house. It was a wonderful day, despite my nerves about health and safety risks and things going up in flames! Two raku kilns in operation with demos by Jo Tricklebank, Helen Scribbans and Neil Rampton and four smoke firing bins with demos by Margaret Newton and Lola Claeys Bouuaert. It was a great learning experience.
- Suzanne Rampton is working on BK 23 – you will have all heard from her about various aspects of it.
- Matt Bugeja is taking over as Social Media Coordinator and will be in touch with the Publicity team.
- Plans for the 50th Anniversary events are ongoing. Likely to involve an additional exhibition at the Oxmarket in 2025. But other ideas for other sorts of events still very welcome.

And that's it for now. Looking forward to a sunny and very busy summer with lots of gatherings of members!

Vasu Reddy, May 2023

scg_chair@southernceramicgroup.org.uk or
vasureddyceramics@gmail.com



Group Update - cont.

NEW MEMBERS - February 23 to June 23

Kate Honey
Kevin Cox
Niraja Pahuja
Srish Jain
Isil Campa

Worthing
Petersfield
Bournemouth
Southampton
Lymington

Helen Honeyman
Sian Plumpton
Sarah Mander
Shelagh Nelmes
Chris Weedon

Rowlands Castle
Crawley
Southampton
Partridge Green

A warm welcome to all these new members and apologies should any have been missed.

Caroline Piggott scg_membership@southernceramicgroup.org.uk



Members' News

HANDMADE, WATERPERRY GARDENS OXFORD

Nine SCG members will be at this international event in June exhibiting under our banner. They are Lynn Nicholls, Vasu Reddy, Suna Imre, Helen Scribbans, Vidya Thirunarayan, Lola Claes Bouuaert, Sue Kelly, and Adrienne Shields. All will be undertaking demonstrations during the three days of the event.

The event's organisers say, "Returning to the beautiful gardens of Waterperry House for the third year, the Handmade Oxford festival will be a celebration of makers, craft & design and artisan food. The hand selected exhibitors will wow with their carefully curated collection, all handmade right here in the UK. Whether you are looking to buy or browse, the relaxed summer atmosphere will be an opportunity for visitors to meet the skilled makers behind the products, engage in the workshops and buy directly from over 150 exceptional makers."



OVER 150 EXHIBITORS...
CRAFT WORKSHOPS...
DEMONSTRATIONS...
LIVE MUSIC &
ARTISAN FOOD...

HANDMADE Oxford
THE INTERNATIONAL
CONTEMPORARY CRAFTS
FESTIVAL

Waterperry Gardens | 16 -18 June 2023



)



ALTERNATIVE FIRINGS DAY - Smoke and Fire! 1 May 2023



Although I never attended any myself, I understand that annual pit firing/ raku days used to be a regular event at Ann Lovejoy's house with the last one held in 2016 (I think). But nothing since then. So there has been a pent-up demand for an alternative firing day ever since.

I'm always up for a bit of fire-raising, so I was very pleased when I received the e-mail to register for this event and spent a few days making several pots to take along. Our e-mail instructions were: Arrive by 10.00 am, bring five smallish biscuit-fired pots, wear scruffy clothes and bring nice food. I arrived at 9.45 to find everything set up - two raku kilns assembled, glazes and brushes set out on tables, metal bins set on bricks and partially stuffed with newspapers and lots of amazing food! Smoke firers were advised to make their pieces from smooth lightly grogged clay such as studio White Earthenware or the more thermally resilient, heavily grogged Ashraf Hanna Raku and then burnish them, while raku firers were advised to make their pieces from Ashraf Hanna Raku or original raku to withstand the thermal shock.

Just after 10.00, with 20 or so eager potters assembled we were given a quick demonstration of how to prepare our pots and what the firing processes entailed. Margaret Newton and Lola Claeys-Bouuaert (the smoke firers) first showed us how to apply terra sigillata, a thick paste of grogged clay, to the pots either in a pattern or as a layer and to carve into. The idea being that post firing once the terra sigillata is removed, those regions that were protected from the smoke would remain pale while the unprotected regions (ie no terra sigillata) would become carbonised and turn brown or black. We were then shown how to apply leaves, feathers etc to pots and how they could be pressed into sawdust in the smoke firing to imprint their patterns on the pots.



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ALTERNATIVE FIRINGS DAY - cont.



Next, Helen Scribbans and Jo Tricklebank (the raku kiln firers) showed us the glazes and how to apply them (all four potters have images of their magnificent work on the SCG website members gallery – have a look).

After a quick safety talk, off we went – busily decorating our pots while the kilns were prepared. With a break for an excellent lunch and a break for a sudden downpour we fired pots throughout the day. There were some astonishing results! Smoke fired pots with lovely soft colours from black through to greys and browns, with the occasional flash of bluey tones or pinks, while raku pots were more textured with vibrant metallic colours. I could have happily taken home many of the pots and displayed them in my house!

Towards the end of the day Neil Rampton gave us a demonstration of copper fuming raku. Pots are sprayed with a thin coat of a mixture of copper carbonate, an alkaline or borax frit and a small amount of bentonite. They are then fired in the raku kiln, removed and allowed to cool slightly then put onto a sawdust base inside a reduction chamber. Reds, blues and purples, similar to the colours of oil on water but much prettier, developed on the pot which were further enhanced by the use of a blowlamp. I've tried this myself and it was a complete failure so it was nice to see someone do it properly.

What a great way to spend a May bank holiday, it was a really fun day and all of us got some great pots to take home. I'm expecting to see many of them at the Bishop's Kitchen this year. Hopefully, if we can persuade Vasu to host this again, we can make it an annual event.

Thanks to all those who helped set it all up and tidy everything away and in particular to:

- Helen Scribbans & Jo Tricklebank – the raku queens
- Margaret Newton & Lola Claeys-Bouuaert - the smoke firing queens
- Vasu Reddy - our host
- Suzanne & Neil Rampton – the safety officers
- Alan Green – our first aider

Anton Page





ART IN THE GARDEN

Explore the 3 acre meadow & woodland path full of artworks

Art in the Garden 2023

25 exhibiting artists & makers
Purchase quality crafts for home & garden
Little Forest Land Art project & Competition finalists
Craft and Nature Workshops

27th May - 10th June
10am-5pm
Closed Tue 30th May, Mon 5th & Tue 6th June

Free Entry / On-site parking
Strictly NO dogs - except guide dogs
Children only with accompanying adult
Payment card facilities now available

Evergreen, Trampers Lane, North Boarhunt, Fareham, Hampshire, PO17 6BU
Follow the Pink Arrows or directions on website

www.littleforestlandart.co.uk

Jan Griffiths says, "I am so lucky to have the work of SCG members Sandra Bidmead, Dot Lawrie and April Stephenson displaying their ceramics alongside my own. It's looking good and Dot's brightly coloured ceramics nested along the woodland path will make you smile."



Social Media



TWITTER ACCOUNT

We now have a fully functioning [twitter](#) account. [Click this link](#) or search [@SCG_Ceramics](#) to view the page, follow and get chatting with fellow SCG members and fans of ceramics around the world. Remember to include [@SCG_Ceramics](#) on your posts. We'd love you to follow the account and Direct Message the account if you have ideas or questions.



INSTAGRAM - STORIES

Not content with beautiful and informative posts, our [SCG Instagram account](#) is now getting more and more active. You will have seen eye-popping posts about member's work on the hugely popular Instagram Stories function. SCG member and volunteer, Libby Daniels, had created animated posts to music to build momentum ahead of the summer exhibition. Please [@SouthernCeramicGroup](#) on your own Instagram stories so that Libby can re-post your stories for even greater exposure. Don't forget to follow [@SouthernCeramicGroup](#) & [#SouthernCeramicGroup](#) when posting your amazing pictures of your ideas, word in progress, hacks etc.



FACEBOOK

If you have not already done so, please follow [@southernceramicsgroup](#) on Facebook - also a great place to see posts from fellow members and find out about local opportunities too. The [Members Chat room](#) is a great place to share ideas, get advice and offer up unwanted equipment etc. If you are a SCG member and have not got access simply use the Facebook messenger function, with your name and membership number.



HELP NEEDED

Please try and use the SCG social media tools available to you to help keep the feeds active and engaging for fellow members. It really helps us get the word out to the broader community about the great work everyone is doing - and will help footfall at exhibitions - and that means better sales!!

There are now vacancies for members to help with social media posts and creating content for sharing across the three social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) If you have experience, or would like to learn how to market on social media, or use social media to your advantage please get in touch. **Volunteering for a hour or two a month is all it takes.**



ADRIAN BATES

On Saturday 4th March we were fortunate to have an excellent demonstration by ceramicist, potter, sculptor Adrian Bates. During the day he threw, slab built, turned, joined and generally gave us an inspiring insight into how he works.

He sees a pot as a story; with the base being the beginning, the middle of the pot the journey and the rim as the end. Often combining both thrown and slab built techniques Adrian's pieces challenge how the clay can move, bend and hold form.

During the day we saw how he creates three of his different styles. These included his thrown spiral bowls, also his elegant tall sculptural pieces and his iconic mobius pieces inspired by a mathematical structure.

He brought examples of his work at different stages of build, and in good 'Blue Peter' style he was able to demonstrate a variety of stages of the development of his work, which was excellent for us watching as we could see the numerous, and often risky, stages each piece has to go through.



The Mobius sculptural pieces are made from a single long slab that is compressed regularly to strengthen the clay and make it denser. He uses a long kidney tool for this process and only starts to create the shape when the clay has been strengthened enough. He then twists and jiggles the piece creating a dynamic form which he then joins together at both ends. It was fascinating to watch him in action, stretching the clay, and regularly using the heat gun to help stabilise the form.

Adrian was very generous with his tips, explanations of his process, the clay he uses - Ashraf Hana - and firing regimes which was much appreciated by all there.

I hadn't been to a live SCG Demo before and was so impressed by the whole day. The demo itself offered such a comprehensive view of Adrian's work. He was really happy to chat and answer questions about what and how he was doing things. Another bonus was the delicious shared lunch, we each took a dish to share, and had a chance to enjoy a range of really tasty food with other SCG members which was very social. Thank you to all who organised and coordinated it.

I left the day inspired and with a list of a couple of tools and techniques I want to try, these include a hack saw blade- oh yes, Adrian used these half blades to trim, shape and for numerous other jobs.



POTS AND MUSEUMS - Kevin Akhurst

Don't get me wrong – I love museums. The hushed galleries (outside the school holidays anyway), the evocation of past times, the beautiful objects. But I have to admit, for a pottery lover, visiting a museum can be a frustrating experience.

To be fair, it is a difficult challenge for them. To start with they usually want to put their pots in glass cases where they are safely separated from the visitors and where they don't require the labour (or risk) associated with frequent dusting. As well as being kept at a distance, the visitor also has to view the exhibits through glass which is reflecting the rest of the room, though I admit that some modern museums have, with the right glass and lighting, successfully minimised this reflection (e.g. the Chinese Ceramics gallery in the British Museum).

Then museums often have a lot of exhibits and limited space, so they pack them in, possibly in a case against a wall where they can only be viewed from one side. They have to try to provide lighting which illuminates each exhibit without it being in shadow from adjacent exhibits or from the shelves above. Even the most prestigious museums can struggle with this. I visited the Ashmolean in Oxford shortly after its big renovation and they had new glass cases with glass shelves inside. The light from the top of the cabinet passed through these shelves to illuminate pots lower down, but unfortunately it was refracted at the edge of the shelf, leaving a dark line which cut across almost every item on the lower level.

There are also more subtle problems if you crowd pots closely together in a display. It is widely recognised that the shape of a pot in some sense 'occupies' a wider region around it. To appreciate the form of the pot properly, you need enough empty space around it. It is difficult to define what is enough, but I expect many of you will recognise the slightly unpleasant crowded feeling you get when you see two pots too close together, so that their forms in some way interfere with each other.

There is also an issue with colour. Psychological studies have shown that our appreciation of colour depends not only on the colour of the surface we are looking at, but also on the colours of surrounding objects. In the context of pottery Rawson* chooses to explain this in terms of after-images – when you look at a coloured surface and then look away you see a faint after-image of the surface in the complementary colour on the opposite side of the colour wheel. If two pots with different colours are close together it is difficult to look at one of them without your perception being affected by the after-image of the other.

Naturally museums don't want visitors handling their fragile exhibits, but a pot can't really be appreciated properly without being handled. To start with, holding the pot allows you to examine it from all angles. Often you can learn a lot by looking underneath a pot to see how the base and foot are formed. It is very rare to find a museum which displays exhibits on glass shelves with mirrors underneath so that you can look at the underside of the pot. Holding a pot, you can examine it close up, hold it up to the light and study particular features in detail. Sometimes I have owned a pot for several years and then, when I have spent the time to examine it closely, I have discovered some feature which helps me understand how it was made.

Just as important, and often forgotten, is that many pots are designed to be held in the hands. Holding such a pot tells you about its weight and balance and how it felt to the original users. The subtleties of a form are often best understood by holding a pot rather than looking at it – the eyes can only look at a pot from one perspective at a time, whereas the hands can encompass the three dimensional nature of the pot in one go. The finger tips are very sensitive and can investigate subtle differences in texture which may reflect the type of glaze and the method of manufacture.

You may say that most museum visitors are not concerned with these details, which is probably true. However, it does seem that if you are more interested in pottery, whether from an aesthetic, historical or technical point of view, you are particularly disadvantaged by museum displays.

So what can be done? I don't think museums are going to start allowing visitors to handle their exhibits, though I have visited a couple which have an area where a few pieces of old pottery are made available to be handled. Unfortunately these handling areas often just contain sherds of pots and for many people it is difficult to imagine how it would feel to handle the whole pot by examining a piece of it.

Most museums welcome people with special interests making appointments to examine items in their reserve collection more closely. Some years ago I was on a committee of the Craft Potters Association and we organised a number of museum visits for groups of members, which allowed us to handle very beautiful and valuable items, from ancient Korean celadons to Renaissance maiolicas and Picasso bowls.

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(cont. from previous page) Generally we were just allowed to pick them up and look at them, though sometimes some rules were wisely imposed – removal of rings from fingers, no passing pots from one person to another, no lifting by handles (often the weakest point), and holding the pots over trays lined with foam sheets. A couple of museums required us to wear vinyl rubber gloves to avoid contaminating the pot surfaces with our sweat. This seemed to me to be an unnecessary restriction when handling fired pottery which has a glaze that is in good condition, and it eliminated much of the tactile appreciation.

The CPA no longer organises these events and it seems to me that museums could take the initiative here by advertising handling sessions, possibly with a charge which would help to cover the cost of a curator gathering the items, supervising the session and commenting on the exhibits during the session.

Another way of handling old pottery is to go to auction viewing days. Usually, for a few days before an auction, the auction house will put the items on display for potential buyers to view. All the auction houses I have visited have been happy for me to handle the pots, usually asking me to hold them over a table with a cushioned surface.

Finally, I should, slightly facetiously, mention that it is possible to own old pottery if you can afford it. I realise that few people have the money and commitment to build their own museum collection. There are also

some ethical issues to be considered. I know of some archaeologists who disapprove of all private ownership of antiquities, I think mainly because this encourages looting of archaeological sites to feed the market. I have agonised a bit about this myself when buying an old pot and I have decided that I will not buy a pot where I have good reason to think that it may have been obtained illegally from an archaeological site, or where the archaeological sites are known to be currently particularly vulnerable to looting. Museums generally have much more pottery in store than they have on display, most of which I suspect never looked at, so I don't feel too bad about some old pots being in private ownership.

I do feel a duty (and it is also a pleasure) to share my old pots with others in any way I can. It is amusing to see a visitor's expression when I hand them a Chinese jar and then tell them that is over 4000 years old. Some want to hand it back as quickly as possible, but others just look at it with wonder. I have found another way of sharing - by writing short notes about individual pots in my collection and circulating them to a small group of friends and pottery lovers. Back numbers of these articles can be found on my website kevinakhurst.com. I enjoy researching and writing these but I couldn't do it without a group of appreciative readers.

Kevin Akhurst
January 2023

* Philip Rawson, *Ceramics*, OUP, 1971



Member's Profile - Anton Page



The first time I tried pottery was when I was in infant school. I made a strange unidentifiable four-legged animal. I proudly took it home and my sister declared that it looked like a poo on legs. My pottery making was abandoned for another 20 years and I trained as a biologist! But when I finished my degree I had a little more time on my hands and thought I would have another go, so I enrolled onto a pottery evening class at Bracknell College. Sadly I can't remember my teacher's name but she was extremely good at teaching the basics and nurturing any available talent I had. I was gripped by the possibilities of clay and have been a part-time potter ever since.

Sue Mundy, my next tutor has the dubious distinction of teaching pottery to Princes William and Harry when they were at their Ludgrove School near Wokingham in Berkshire (I wonder how their ceramic career has progressed). It was in Sue's class that I learned that you can make pots that don't have a use and are purely decorative and sculptural (Have a look at her work [here](#)). As a result, although there is still space for traditional glazed ware my work has evolved to include more sculptural pieces, not necessarily functional, but hopefully something that can be seen as 3-dimensional art and the bigger the better!



I've since topped up my learning by attending a pottery course at West Dean where Alison Sandeman improved my throwing technique and at Ruardean Pottery in the Forest of Dean where John Huggins helped me throw truly massive pots.

My pots are heavily influenced by traditional unglazed pottery, such as storage jars, from around the world (Pompeii, Zimbabwe, Hong Kong) and also by the many standing stones found in the UK. I've even made my own set modelled on the amazing [Hurlers](#) stone circle on Bodmin Moor in Cornwall. The overall feel I am trying to achieve with my pots is "earthy, rustic and textured", so for my more sculptural pieces, I tend not to use conventional glazes but prefer the raw surface of heavily grogged, gritty clays such as crank or raku. These are then finished with oxides, wood ash, metal powders and even road salt to add to the rough-hewn weathered appearance.

All my work is single fired where possible (saving both money and carbon emissions!), in an electric kiln.

Occasionally the finished pots may get a splash of glaze or the addition of a complimentary material such as coloured glass or gold leaf to give the pot a lift and make a real statement piece.

Anton Page





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Newsletter Publication - Dates and Guidance

Please send contributions to: scg_newsletter@southernceramicgroup.org.uk

NEWSLETTER DUE:	1 October 2023	COPY DEADLINE:	16 September 2023
	1 February 2024		17 January 2024
	1 June 2024		17 May 2024

Keep me posted, please, at any time before the deadline with your news of galleries and exhibitions showing your work, studio tips, memories, and especially images that might be shared.

Photos and other images. Please send these as separate .jpg files. If your document contains embedded photos that is not a problem as it shows me where they should be placed but I always need them as separate files as well with descriptive file name please, (e.g. Freda blue pot). And please remember the reproduction limitations of the newsletter if viewing your technical or aesthetic detail clearly is paramount.

Neil Dewey



Advertisements

Interested in advertising in the Southern Ceramic Group Newsletter?

If so please contact Neil Dewey : scg_newsletter@southernceramicgroup.org.uk

The rates for advertising are:

SCG MEMBERS:	FREE
COMMERCIAL B&W/COLOUR:	
Full Page	£20
Half Page	£10



New Members

Interested in becoming a member of the Southern Ceramic Group?

Application forms can be found on the Group's website at:

<https://www.southernceramicgroup.org.uk/join/>



Acknowledgments

Thanks go to regular contributors to the Newsletter and all the new ones prepared to have a go and submit something.



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