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50th

Group Anniversary

Group Update

CHAIR'S LETTER

Hello Everyone, Greetings from India!

I seem to have escaped the icy weather in Britain just in time. I'm here in Hyderabad for my annual battery re-charging visit. Here also, at the moment, is one of our members – Jo Tricklebank - invited to run a workshop on her novel method of painting with porcelain paper clay to make her fine sculptures. Attending the workshop will be studio ceramicists from across India who are exhibiting at the Hyderabad Potters Market mid-January.

Happy 50th anniversary, everyone! We have some exciting events lined up for this year.

The first, of course, is the **50th anniversary celebration at The Brickworks Museum** on 15 June. Your committee is still working tirelessly behind the scenes to organise this event.

Please put these dates in your diary:

- **helping with set up on the 14th**
- **and attending the event on the 15th**

The event on the 15th is a **friends and family affair** – so please rope them in. If they haven't

been to the museum before, know that it is absolutely worth a visit. It is the only Victorian steam-driven brickworks museum in Britain, and is full of brick moulds, giant pug mills and other clay-processing machines which are fascinating. The Museum allows all members free entry (we will give you a badge to show membership) – so do make use of this.

We are also organising **events on June 15** which are free and open to the public as well. Highlights are :

An **exciting challenge to members to create pieces for an installation** to hang (Suspended in Time!) in the beautiful drying rooms of the Museum. You will have already had an email from SCG Secretary Francheska Pattison about this, asking for initial rough proposals. Please do **let yourself go, and try this challenge** – should be fun! The two visiting speakers will form a panel to judge and award a prize to the best creation.

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We also have something unusual – a **Big Build** – that is open to all visitors to the Museum on the day. This is a different kind of challenge to visitors and members alike – get your hands into clay even if for the first time – and build as big as you can get.

We are also hoping to get **voices from the past** – from the origins of the SCG in 1975 – to be heard by you.

The second special anniversary event is an **Exhibition at the Oxmarket Gallery** in November. You will be hearing more about this from Lynn Nicholls, so I won't say any more here.

See you at the AGM on Sunday 2 March – for a wonderful demo by Tanya Gomez and hopefully a lively chat at the AGM.

Enough for now – my breakfast of dosas and coconut chutney awaits!
Vasu!

scg_chair@southernceramicgroup.org.uk

SAVE THE DATES! SCG EXHIBITIONS FOR 2025

We have two exciting exhibition opportunities for members to exhibit and sell their work.

- Our annual, and highly successful, **Great Kitchen, Bishop's Palace Chichester (GK25)** exhibition starts on **Saturday 26 July to Sunday 10 August 2025**. The venue is next to Chichester Cathedral.
- A new and special 50th Anniversary opportunity will be hosted at the **Oxmarket Contemporary Gallery in Chichester (Ox25)** starting **Tuesday 18 November to Sunday 30 November 2025**.

Many visitors to our exhibitions want to find out about particular artists so I would like to refresh our folder of member biographies. Please do start thinking about that and submit your page to Nick Taylor scg_webmaster@southernceramicgroup.org.uk so that it can be included on the website. More information can be found by clicking [Website-Members-Gallery-Entry-v5.doc \(live.com\)](#)

If you would like to be more involved in the 2025 exhibitions, please let me know.

Diane Henshaw

scg_summer_exhibition_coordinator@southernceramicgroup.org.uk

NEW MEMBERS

Since the end of August ten new members have joined the group.

Lucy Prosser	Petersfield	Andrew Beney	Woking
Lynda Meakins	Southampton	Katerina Frere-Smith	Chichester
Kay Meddings	Bedfordshire	Teresa Munn	Berkshire
Stephan Clasper	Hindhead	Helen Piper	Hursley, Winchester
Victoria Welling	Hayling Island	Emma Vaughan	(location not given)

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

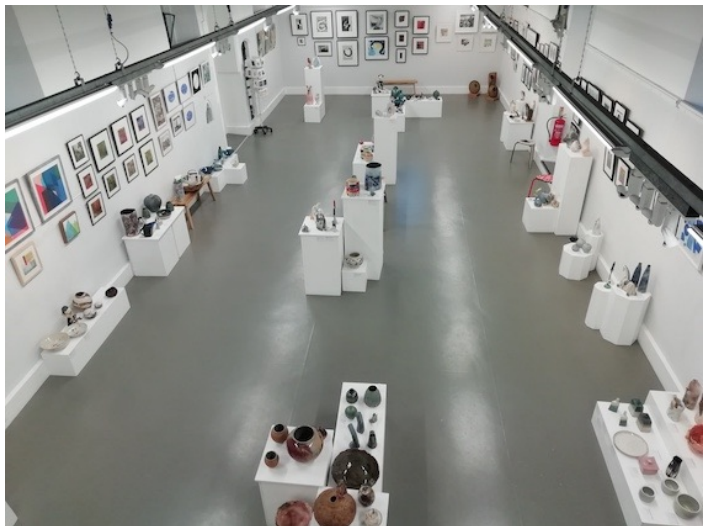
Your committee would love new members to briefly introduce themselves via the Newsletter pages. We hope to provide guidance shortly - but be assured we are not looking for anything as lengthy as may be found on the Member's Profile pages of the edition.

Caroline Piggott scg_membership@southernceramicgroup.org.uk



PRINT PRESS FIRE GLAZE - Review

In late November members of SCG joined a group of Printmakers at the Print Press Fire Glaze exhibition at Oxmarket Contemporary in Chichester. The ideas behind the exhibition were to show visitors the similarities between these two creative disciplines, to showcase high quality printmaking and ceramics in the region and to create an opportunity for makers and printmakers to share their work, practice and ideas.



It's not possible to know if the initial ideas for an exhibition will be realised until you see the work hung and displayed. But judging from the very positive feedback received from visitors, fellow exhibitors and the gallery, I think the ceramic and print hanging teams did a great job.

Two talks accompanied the exhibition. One where ceramicist Vasu Reddy and printmaker Sarah Mander discussed the similar themes behind their work, their processes and what they do when they get creatively stuck.



The second talk explored the shared skills employed by printmakers and ceramicists in the development of their work. This included a lively demonstration by Anton Page, where he talked about and worked on a part completed pot. Also, an illustrated talk by Ruth Barrett Danes, where Ruth showed examples of some of the printing plates she had used to create some of the images in the exhibition.

Both talks were well attended and sparked conversations and questions between the artists and the audience.

The PV was very well attended and members of the gallery team commented on the popularity of the show during its run. Sales were also healthy for both ceramic and prints, totalling close to £5000.



EMPTY BOWLS

On the 6 December 2024 we held our 8th annual Empty Bowls (EB) event at St Simon's Church in Southsea Portsmouth. Tickets sold out well in advance despite increasing the ticket price to £17.50. More than 100 bowls were made and donated by members of SCG, FatClay and other local potters in the area. This sell out event included a raffle with all donated gifts given by Southsea based artists and local independent shops. The combined funds raised on the night was just over £2,400.00.

The total proceeds from the evening has been donated to two of St Simon's charities supporting the homeless and asylum seekers.

A further £507 was raised through an online auction of 12 bowls that were decorated by a range of local Portsmouth based artists who donated their time and skills during 3 free workshops for them to attend for free. The funds will pay for the materials, firing, glazes and workshops for Empty Bowls 2025 which is planned for 5 December 2025. The small team of 3 volunteers have already met and bowl making sessions start in February 2025.

Special thanks to SCG who supported EB this year with a financial contribution, to Bread Addiction Bakery in Southsea for the delicious bread and to local supporters who produced six different homemade soups.



Before the auction various events were organised together with bowls donated came from various sources.

Three artist decorating workshops took place with 12 local artists. 18 SCG members donated bowls. Rich Miller from the Great Pottery Throwdown donated one of his handmade bowls for the auction.



There were free EB decorating sessions which were attended by various amateur art group based in Portsmouth and a children's making session was organised. In addition Five free throwing sessions were hosted at FatClay with the support of SCG members.

Later in the year Lynn Nicholls will inform SCG members so they may have the opportunity to support EB in 2025 if they so wish.

Lynn Nicholls (SCG member and EB co-ordinator) and **Louise Roulston** (St Simon's volunteer and EB co-ordinator).



CERAMICUS 2025 Exhibition at City Space, Winchester

SCG members Nigel Hobbs and Mike Bush, both members of the Ceramicus group of potters, are taking part in a special exhibition to be held at City Space, Winchester. Ceramicus 2025 is timed to coincide with an important Hans Coper exhibition in the main gallery.

- Hans Coper: Resurface (22 January- 24 March)
[Hans Coper: Resurface The Gallery](#)
- Ceramicus 2025 (9 January - 23 March)
[Ceramicus 2025 | Hampshire Cultural Trust](#)

Ceramicus 2025 **Exhibition of Ceramics**
THE ARC City Space
 Jewry Street, Winchester SO23 8SB

To be held in conjunction with an exhibition of the celebrated potter Hans Coper

HANS COPER: RESURFACE
 From 22nd January

9 January - 23 March 2025
 Monday to Saturday 9.30am - 5.00pm
 Sunday 11.00am - 5.00pm

www.ceramicus.co.uk
 www.hampshirculture.org.uk



The quality of the work produced by Ceramicus in previous events has been recognised by being chosen to exhibit at the same time as the important Hans Coper exhibition. It's heartening to see the talent of Nigel Hobbs, Mike Bush, and other Ceramicus members being recognized alongside the prestigious Hans Coper exhibition.



Most Ceramicus members trained with the inspirational teacher, Katerina Evangelidou of West Street Potters, Farnham. Katerina Evangelidou is a selected member of the CPA.

In tribute, examples of her work will also be shown at Ceramicus 2025, together with those of her collaborator Graham Ellerby



ART IN THE GARDEN 2025

Jan Griffiths is looking for members interested in applying to exhibit their work during Art in the Garden 2025 event May/June in North Boarhunt. Work suitable for the external environment will be considered.

Application form and full details on the website:
www.littleforestlandart.co.uk

Little Forest Land Art

Open Art Competition

Display your work at Art in the Garden 2025

LFLA are looking for artworks to display at Art in the Garden, an annual open studio event in the Hampshire countryside, featuring work from numerous invited artists and makers.

Prizes:
The Judges' Choice will receive £150
The People's Choice winner will receive £50

Closing date:
10th February 2025

FREE TO ENTER

Judges:
Laura Joy, Arts Manager, University Hospitals Dorset
Dr. Liz K Miller, Artist and Researcher, and our 2024 winner plus LFLA's Jan Griffiths & Adrian Mundy

SCAN FOR DETAILS

www.littleforestlandart.co.uk Little Forest Land Art @littleforestlandart LittleForestLandArt

SPUDWORKS - 'CLAY'

CLAY

SPUDWORKS GALLERY

SPUD STUDIO ARTISTS INVITE ...

ARCHES STUDIO

A SHOW EXPLORING THE CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES AND MAGIC OF CLAY FROM PORCELAIN TO MUD

THE EXHIBITION IS OPEN FROM:
4 FEB - 1 MAR 2025
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM MON SAT
AT SPUDWORKS, SWAY
HAMPSHIRE SO41 6BA

OPEN PUBLIC EVENT
SATURDAY 8 FEB 4-8PM

FREE ENTRY

CLAY WORKSHOPS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC OVER THE COURSE OF THE EXHIBITION
DETAILS ON THE WEBSITE

GET MORE INFORMATION AT WWW.SPUD.ORG.UK OR @SPUDARTISTSSTUDIOS

Isil Campanella, one of the ceramic artists at SpudWORKS gallery <https://www.spud.org.uk/>, notes that as well as the exhibition advertised on this flyer for their upcoming exhibition there will be another CLAY Exhibition in September.



FATCLAY - Exhibition Opportunity

Emily at Fatclay Pottery would like members to know that they are looking for new artists' work to exhibit in their gallery space.

Please contact them directly at hello@fatclaypottery.com with images of their works and they will come back to you with further details.

FATCLAY POTTERY 67, Castle Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3AY
07476759199 & 07950155456



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 your stories can be re-posted for even greater exposure. Don't forget to follow [@SouthernCeramicGroup](#) & [#SouthernCeramicGroup](#) when posting your amazing pictures of your ideas, work in progress, hacks etc.

We are constantly looking for help with our media content. If there are any members who would be interested in joining a small social media team to help on specific events please contact Neil Rampton.

Neil Rampton scg_treasurer@southernceramicgroup.org.uk



FACEBOOK

If you have not already done so, please follow [@southernceramicgroup](#) 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!!

To learn how to market on social media, or use social media to your advantage please get in touch



Alternative Firings Day - 3 November 24

On a chilly damp November Sunday morning thirty potters gathered, wrapped in as many layers as the pots they carried. The murmur of questions, the glad greetings of old friends warmed the air. We were at the property of one our very generous members, somewhere north of Alton, so thank you to Nina and Lawrence for hosting the day.

Various stations were being set up; raku, naked raku (no, not too cold for that), pit, obvara and smoke firings. Many of us had only hazy ideas of what some of these techniques entailed, but we were lucky to have dedicated experienced volunteers for each process, guiding and encouraging us. "It was such hard work and we enjoyed wonderful support from all the pyrotechnicians."



The first task of the day was to pack the pit with pots and timber and to get the fire going. Lesley and Mick Dixon had already constructed a brick structure the day before, so they were quick to fill it with the potters' offerings and kept curious potters safely away from the heat while they ignited the stack. Over the course of the day they refuelled the fire opened and closed air vents and covered the pit with corrugated metal sheets to allow the heat to become even across the structure.



The grand opening was achieved before most of us left, so we were able to reclaim our work. There wasn't a single broken pot and some of the results were sublime.



Margaret was allocated a little more space outside the walled garden for the smoke firings. She conducted dozens of us with the use of three large metal lidded bins throughout the day and also generously provided resist slips and tools for all to use.



Jo Tricklebank gave us a tutorial in raku techniques before letting us at her beautifully laid out bench of resist slips and glazes. We sopped and dolloped, painted and resisted and soon filled the table with items ready for the raku firings. Jo, Vicky, Marigo, and Anton (sorry if I've left anyone out) worked hard through smoke and steam to process the raku work, whether naked (i.e. without glazes) or using resist slips and glazes. There were two or three kilns on the go, and several buckets with sawdust to create the reduction atmosphere and bring about some beautiful colouration.

Jan Griffiths had very helpfully sent us all in advance a thorough explanation of obvara firing. I include it at the end of this article for those interested in the technique. **(Editor's note: see Tips Tricks & Tech section on pages 15-16.)** It was the process least well known to the group, but one which had intriguing results. "I fell in love today - obvara, here I come!". A total of fourteen batches of obvara firings were achieved.

Everyone brought contributions for a sharing lunch which was much enjoyed, particularly being able to sit down and relax together in the middle of the day.

Thank you to Lesley, Mick, Jan, Margaret, Jo, Vicky and Marigo. Many thanks also to all those who helped set up, who did a great job on parking duty and who helped clear up at the end. An enormous thank you to Vasu, our chairman, who drove this event into being, and organised us all with enthusiasm and energy.



Here are a few more of the quotes during the days afterwards:

"Thrilled with my results."

"Absolutely great day."

"I learnt so much."

"A wonderful day of pyrotechnic fun"

"A roaring success"

"So much hard work from our fabulous organisers and demonstrators, I know how much hard work has gone into the day. Thank you all."

"Loved every damp minute, already desperate to do it again."

"Thanks to everyone for a marvellous day. It was great to meet so many old friends again and make some new ones as well."

"A fantastic day in good company with some great results and inspiration for new things to try."

"So many happy faces and great to meet old friends and make new ones. A day like this reminds me of how good it is to be a member of the SCG and what our committee do to bring us together".

Francheska Pattison Hon. Sec., SCG



i'm thrilled to announce our upcoming demonstration on Sunday 2 March, featuring the talented potter **Tanya Gomez**, renowned for her striking porcelain vessels in lustrous colours.

With an MA in Ceramics from the Royal College of Art and 15 years of experience, Tanya's dynamic throwing, cutting, and assembling techniques result in expressive, architectural forms inspired by her coastal travels and years at sea.



If you want to know more about Tanya and her work, you can visit her website: <https://www.tgceramics.co.uk/biography>

Her work is recognised by the Arts Council and Crafts Council of England and has gained international acclaim.

The day will include a throwing demonstration and a fun, non-throwing practical activity.

Date: Sunday 2 March
Time: 10am–4pm
Location: Herne Farm Leisure Centre, Crundles, Petersfield GU31 4PJ



This event will include our **50th Anniversary AGM**. If you plan to attend the AGM but not the demonstration, please let Francesca Pattison know as soon as possible.

Save the date!

Maria Shapiro scg_demonstrations@southernceramicgroup.org.uk

Dear SCG Member,

I have been a member of Southern Ceramic Group for many years, but only took a more active interest in the past two. I became honorary secretary of SCG eighteen months ago and have enjoyed getting to know other members of SCG committee as well as helping to organise the Brickworks Museum event for all of us on June 15th.

I have also had the opportunity to read through some of the archive material from the early years of the group. This has prompted me to think more deeply about Southern Ceramic Group, the reason it was formed, what it provided to early members and what it has grown into today. (Incidentally, we are hoping to create a way of sharing some of this history at the celebratory events in June and November).

The first meeting was held at Southampton Art College on 25th February 1975, and 35 members were enrolled. During that first year a series of lectures, slide shows, pot criticism sessions, art collection and museum visits and social evenings were organised. Roll on fifty years, and our membership is over 240 with ceramicists as far afield as Dorset, Kent, and Bedfordshire.

It has made me ponder the question what is Southern Ceramic Group for? What can it provide to its membership?

In the past year I answered a call put out to members to be part of a small, limited group who meet monthly to discuss all things ceramic. Over a cup of coffee at the Allen Gallery in Alton, conversations range from recent museum or art visits, to analysing faulty pots, glazing techniques (always a popular conundrum), kiln servicing, alternative firings, and so many

more fascinating (to potters) topics. I feel we are making firm friends who support and inform each other.

With such a large society, doing this as one body is very difficult, but being a member of SCG means we can find out where other potters are based. Potting life is often a solitary existence and I know that these two groups, the committee, and the forum, have exposed my potting curiosity to more experienced minds and enthusiastic friends. My point is this: if we are now too large to be able to provide frequent meetings as one group, why not use your membership to reach out to potters in your own locality and form smaller, informal, social networks for your mutual benefit. Become 'potters at the pub', host potting suppers, enjoy coffee together, whatever suits your group.

So, do I regret taking so long to develop a vested interest in the group? Yes, I have wasted time when I could have had friends and support and access to invaluable advice from those much more experienced than (and with different taste to) me. Apart from the wonderful demonstrations by professional potters, collective exhibitions to sell our ceramics and the occasional celebratory events like at The Brickworks Museum, creating small local groups, as the founder members did in 1975, will mean that Southern Ceramic Group will continue to have a purpose in connecting ceramic artists across the south.



Francheska Pattison



I am a self-taught sculptor working in ceramics and bronze. I started late in life at the age of 68 about 5 years ago. My style is quite recognisable, I tend to take no real notice of actual body measurements and prefer to work to an overall composition. I tend to use very few tools preferring to let my hands and the clay find the final form.

My professional life from 1976 was working as a commissioned professional photographer right up to 2004 when I went into publishing! At first with calendars and greetings cards, all photographic and in 2009 I then formed Maverick Arts Publishing Ltd where the company publishes a wide range of children's books. I still act as MD for the company and we are currently heading up development of a fantasy fiction series for potential TV.



'Sorrel'



'Pocono'



'Lyra'

I work on sculpture most weeks and have had an amount of limited success in exhibiting in Madrid and Rome, The Paris Art Fair and Venice. I have had two solo shows, one in London and just recently at the Wilson Gallery at Oxmarket Contemporary in Chichester where I was fortunate enough to sell 16 ceramic sculptures and one bronze. I have really taken to the Wilson Gallery, it is a perfect size to be able to show a range of work and I have rebooked for the first two weeks of September. For this show I am looking for a landscape artist to adorn the walls and share costs.

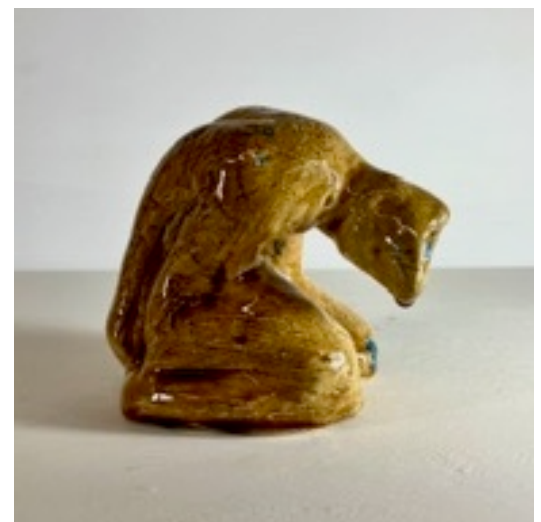
I am a member of Surrey Sculpture Society, The Cotswold Sculpture Society, plus Horsham and Sussex Artists, and delighted to be a new member of Southern Ceramic Group where I hope to be able to participate and meet as many members as possible during the year. All members are welcome to contact me should they wish to come up to my studio by arrangement.

Steve Bicknell

07941 802829

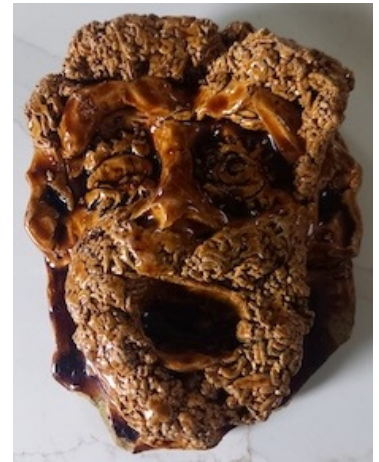
<http://www.bicknellsculpture.com/>

'Taurus'





My story with clay begins at the age of 11 when I first played with it in art class at school. As far back as I can remember I have enjoyed drawing and painting, but when I was able to bring my art to life through clay I was hooked! I still have my first piece 'Henry' from that time. When I started college at 19 years old I was able to take a pottery class alongside my other courses and I still have a couple of my pieces from that time too: 'Cathy' and my 'Chinese horse', which was inspired by Chinese ink wash paintings, which capture movement so beautifully.



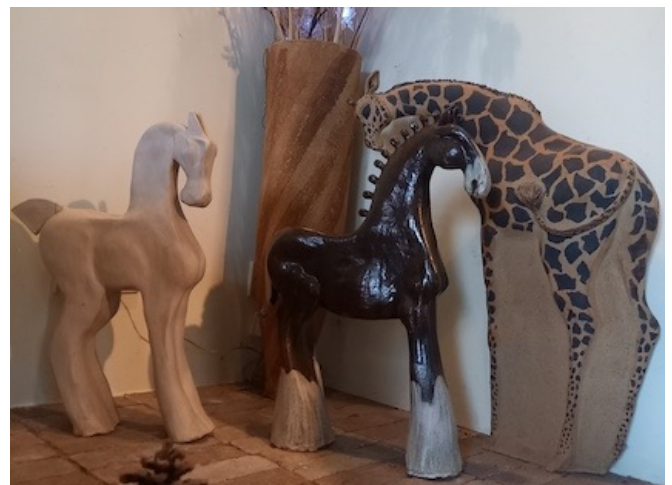
'Henry'



'Cathy' and 'Chinese Horse'

When my college days were over I did not touch clay again until 1997. During that time we relocated our young family from Essex to Selsey, West Sussex. A good friend I had made whilst waiting in the school playground to pick up our children said to me one day, "Let's do a course together at college." I said, "Pottery! it has to be pottery!"

Big work from Sheila Williams days



So we started a ceramic class at Chichester College under the guidance of the dearly loved Sheila Williams, who has sadly since passed away. We had seven wonderful years with her, she was such an amazing teacher and lovely woman. I focused particularly on making large-scale pieces at that time, mainly animal forms. When she retired Jim Ransom took over, but after only about 2-3 years the ceramic classes were moved to another college further away and I could no longer attend due to the distance.

My husband encouraged me to get my own kiln and continue working independently, but I was lacking in confidence and loved feeling part of a community that attending classes had given me, so I had a 10 year long break until 2017.

That year my husband and I went on the Chichester Art Trail for the very first time, and of course visited all the ceramic artists. My husband signed me up for a 6 week course with Su Cloud and I soon found that my passion for clay had never left me. I also joined an Aspire ceramics course held at Orimston Six Villages Academy with another wonderful teacher, Malcolm, and had the best time.

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Finally I got Bertha (my kiln) in January 2019. I was so excited, but I didn't really have a clue as to what I was doing! All thanks to Reg Griggs though for coming to my rescue when I had teething problems with her.

My work is all hand built. I cannot throw. I did try in class with Sheila but I didn't like it, it hurt! I suppose I just didn't persevere. I remember Sheila saying to me, "You are either a hand builder or a thrower, very rarely are you both, as you will tend to like one more than the other." I love making sculptural pieces, so hand-building suits my work better.

I use all forms of hand building, pinch pots, coiling, and slab work; which I particularly enjoy, and most of the animals I create are made using this method. First, I draw my design, then I make templates to cut out the form, which I manipulate by pressing out the slabs, before joining them together to get depth on the body.



Egyptian Cat



Goats on Driftwood

What inspires me is God's amazing, wonderful and beautiful creation. I love all of nature, both flora and fauna. I love making horses (my favourite animal) cats, birds, fish, goats and rabbits; I suppose I make what I am particularly inspired by at the time. I am drawn to shapes with curves and fluidity which, when interpreted through clay, create shapes with wonderful tactility. I try to capture movement in my pieces, which will hopefully make you want to touch them. Hence my pieces are more stylized than realistic.

Like many potters, I find glazing tricky. In the old days I would mainly stick to Oxides and Dolomite glaze. On the whole I prefer matt or soft satin finish glazes rather than high gloss glazes. That being said, I have been experimenting with ready-made high gloss mixable glazes recently. (I don't make any of my own, I am not that technical!) I always remember Malcolm from my Aspire classes saying, "You can make a good pot bad through glaze but you can also make a bad pot good through glaze." That is so very true.



Raku smoke fired doves

I do not know where my ceramic journey will take me next, but I know I will never tire of opening up Bertha for the big reveal, as you just never know what you are going to get!

Deborah Kolios



We thought we would try a new series of items in the newsletter called **Tips, Tricks & Tech**. Mainly but not exclusively short items outlining a method or a tool that that you find invaluable and which may be of use to others, or an unusual technique from another creative discipline that you have adapted for your ceramic work. Some of you may already know about these but others may not. So, if you have a cunning technique that you find invaluable and you think others might find it useful then please share it. And include an image or two. To begin what we hope will become a regular section of the newsletter here are three items.

HOW TO REPAIR CRACKS IN UNFIRED POTS - Anton Page

I ran a workshop recently and one of the students made an octopus. Unfortunately, one of the arms broke off as it was drying. It was a nice piece so I wanted to try and repair it before it was fired, rather than glue it back on after firing. So I searched the web for a way to fix it and came up with the following method which worked really well.

Ingredients:

- White vinegar – 25 to 50 mls
- Toilet paper – 3 to 4 sheets torn up
- Dry clay crushed to a powder – sufficient for a smooth paste. It's best to use the clay that the pot was made from.

Method:

1. Mix the ingredients and leave for a few hours or overnight. I keep the slip mixture in an air-tight jar so I can use it again.
2. If you are filling a crack in a pot - moisten the crack with a bit of vinegar, score gently and fill with slip.
3. If you are joining two pieces together (i.e. sticking an octopus arm back on!), moisten both broken surfaces with vinegar, score gently and paint slip onto both surfaces. Then score and apply a second coat of slip. Finally, stick the pieces together. Be precise – you don't get much chance to slide the pieces into place – they stick almost immediately.
4. Allow the piece to dry
5. Sand very gently and.....it's ready to fire.



The original video can be found [here](#) and the repaired octopus is shown in the image (the repaired limb is at the front) I have now tried this a few times and it has worked brilliantly every time. Apparently, you can even use it on bisque fired pieces.

OBVARA FIRING - Jan Griffiths

Where Did It Originate?

Obvara (pronounced ab-vara and is sometimes known as "Baltic raku") originated in Eastern Europe (mainly Belarus, Estonia, and Latvia) in around the 12th century. Master potter Daniil Pavelchuk who works in Minsk has described how recently "Obvara ceramics comes back to us from ancient times, bringing into our homes the ancient secrets of health and longevity." The technique is known as "hardened ceramics" or "blackened pots" in Latvia, "sourdough pottery" or "yeast pottery" in Lithuania, and "scalded ceramics" in Russia. Janice Chassier who has looked closely into the subject has written about how the technique originally "may have resulted by accident when a hot pot fell into a bucket of fermented kitchen scraps."

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Obvara is not purely decorative either; it's said to have spiritual connotations where potters and locals from the villages would believe that the Obvara pattern of eyes that occurred "protected the food their pots held from evil spirits." Obvara pots also absorb moisture very well, so they are known to be great for cooking in.

How Do You Do It?



Obvara is actually fairly easy to develop on your own and a really exciting technique to try out on your work. The ingredients are very easy to obtain and are probably already in your kitchen cupboards. You'll need flour, sugar, yeast, and warm water.

As Obvara works in the same way as raku, you must use clay (with grog) that can handle the thermal shock. The pot goes through a bisque firing heated to between 850 – 1000C.



When doing the Obvara firing the pot is taken out while still burning hot, as with raku. The pot is then dunked in the Obvara briefly, or the mix can be poured over before being dunked briefly in water to `freeze` the pattern all in a matter of seconds. The water instantly cools the pot slightly and it is then left to cool naturally. Once the piece is cooled it can be washed lightly with a sponge.

The excitement is seeing what the pot looks like once it's cooled, as the effects can be quite magical and different every time. Some of them can look like they've been dug up hundreds of years ago. In the same way as with 'naked raku' firing, you don't need to glaze the piece after the first bisque firing process. It's also a smokeless firing, which is a huge plus point. The trickiest part of this process is the fact that you have to remove the pot from the kiln with a pair of tongs before transferring it to the yeast mixture and then into the water; therefore, you have to be really careful to ensure not to drop the piece, or hold too long in either of the liquids to prevent explosions!



I find a pale coloured raku clay works best, although porcelain clay can work very well. Also, some people use coloured slip before bisque firing as a background colour. Burnishing works well, but this method is also good for rough textured surfaces.

After cooling, washing and drying, Obvara clay pieces can be polished with beeswax to make them less porous and give a nice finish on smooth pieces. If you don't like the pattern the piece can be re-fired as the obvara pattern burns off.



Enjoy experimenting!!

Obvara Recipe:

This is my version of the obvara liquid:

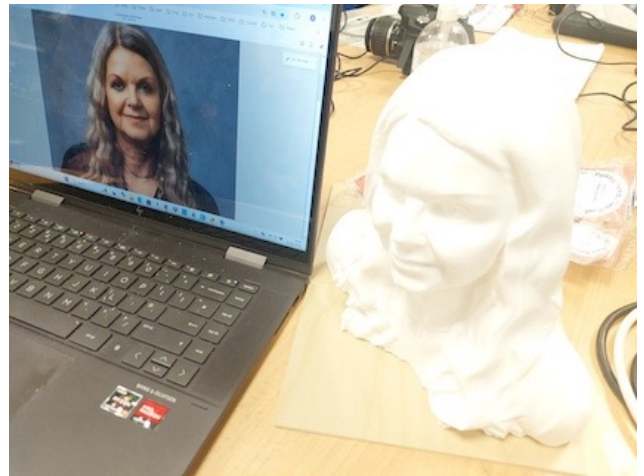
Mix 1 kg flour / 1 or 2 sachets dried yeast / 1 tablespoon sugar and 8 - 10 litres warm water - leave covered in a warm place for 3 days, (though in warmer countries it seems to work sooner) - stir frequently. Some potters have also been reported to add a little milk to their Obvara mixture.



3D PRINTER TO PRESS MOULD - Alan Green

I am a member of Basingstoke Makerspace.
www.basingstokemakerspace.org.uk

Another member showed me a plastic model bust of his wife. Her photo had been run through an AI program to generate a 3D image consisting of thousands of reference points. This "model" was then processed on a 3D printer. From the plastic model I cast front and back using Plaster of Paris. I decided to use these to press mould the clay. This was due to the time factor and complexity of alignment of the moulds.



The clay used was a heavily grogged stoneware, only because it was sitting in my studio for ages. A heat gun was used to dry it to leather hard. It then easily dropped out of the mould and I could join the 2 halves with slip. There was a bit of making good required (only because I didn't add enough water to the plaster of Paris and it didn't flow into the plastic models' details). Next time I will make sure it does.

It only remains to fire and glaze it. Maybe a matt glaze or underglaze to pick out the green dress and hair colour



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Newsletter Publication - Dates and Guidance

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

NEWSLETTER DUE:	1 June 2025	COPY DEADLINE:	17 May 2025
	1 October 2025		16 September 2025
	1 February 2026		17 January 2026

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.

Article Ideas. I would be pleased to discuss ideas you may have before drafting. Generally 5-600 words would be the ideal with a maximum size of 1000 plus photos.

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



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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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