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# NPA NEWS

The magazine of the Northern Potters Association

March—April 2011

[www.northern-potters.co.uk](http://www.northern-potters.co.uk)



In this issue:

NPA - What it's for, Wood Fired Kiln Build, A Career in Clay

## Editor's Comment

In this issue, Veronica Ballan tells us about her 'Career in Clay' (page 12). I was particularly fascinated to see the image from British Craft Trade Fair in 1982 - it looks a very different affair from the sleek, highly polished, market savvy event it is today! It's wonderful to hear that Veronica still finds new customers there each year.

With an even longer involvement with clay, John Egerton has 45 years of experience, which shows through in the quality of his work. Shirley Sheppard has invited John to exhibit at her 10th anniversary show at Blandscliff gallery, Scarborough, and writes warmly about this unsung hero (page 10).

We have a fantastic technical piece from Bob Park (page 18), describing the long anticipated rebuild of his wood fired kiln. The pictures are particularly clear, and document the key stages, so that even a total wood firing novice such as myself can follow what's going on. It really helps one to understand the process better. If you're in the area (Cumbria), and would like to get some hands-on experience, Bob will be firing during National Ceramics Week, and invites members to bring work to put in the kiln.

I was rather short of images for the members' gallery, and potential ones for the covers. Please send in more high resolution images which I can consider for future issues. Include a title and a few words about the making and firing, and who knows where they might end up? I pick out one of the colours from the front cover pot for the headings throughout the magazine, and realise that we've been in a yellow/orange/ochre palette lately, so it would be nice to get onto a different colour theme.

I've had a bit of a rant about NPA, which I hope may provoke a response. It would be reassuring to think that some of you are reading this!

I'm pleased to say the diary page is full again, but do remember to send information in. I try to include national ceramic events, but sometimes they pass me by, so a reminder won't go amiss.

Barbara Wood

### Cover :

Hannah McAndrew - **Birdie Mugs**, thrown red earthenware with slips and glaze

*Members' Gallery - has moved to page 14*

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## New Books - Roger Bell

The Art of Throwing	AlexMcErlain	16.99
Chinese Ceramics from the Paleolithic Period Through the Qing Dynasty	Ed Buchanan	
Contemporary British Studio Ceramics	Ed Annie Carlano	35.00
The Cultural Aesthetics of 18 <sup>th</sup> Century Porcelain	Ed Cavanaugh	65.00
French Porcelain for English Palaces	Joanna Gwilt	14.95
The Handbook of Visual Culture	Ed Heywood	80.00
Introducing Pottery: The Complete Guide	Dan Rhodes	19.99
Kiln Forming Glass	H. Watkins-Baker	25.00
Pottery & Ceramics, Glass, Metal: A Walk into Islamic History	Various	50.00
10,000 Years of Pottery	Emmanuel Cooper	24.99
Upclose: Rob Kesseler		25.00

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## Deadline For Next Issue

All material for the **next issue** to be with Barbara Wood  
**by 18 April 2011**

Text and images can be e-mailed to [npanews@btinternet.com](mailto:npanews@btinternet.com), sent on CD or in long hand with photographs to Old Mills, Seaton Ross, YORK, YO42 4NH. Images should be high resolution digital where possible - 180mm x 130mm at 300dpi preferred, and please send some good colour images of your work for the members' gallery. Articles should be no more than 1,000 words, and preferably have related images available (send as separate files, not embedded in the text).

## Exhibitions & Events

### Northern Stars

The New School House Gallery, Peasholme Green, York  
www.schoolhousegallery.co.uk  
A selected exhibition by members of Northern Potters Association

You are invited to the private view on Thursday, 21 April, from 6pm to 9pm

The exhibition runs until 4 June

### Earth & Fire 2011

Congratulations to Jan Lewis-Eccleston, Lesley Nason and Alan Ball, who were selected to share the NPA group stand at Earth & Fire, Rufford, 24 - 26 June. They will be selling their own work, and also encouraging visitors to buy newsletters and join NPA. If you're visiting or exhibiting, do go along and introduce yourself.

## York Open Air Art Exhibitions

Once again all welcome

### Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> May and Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2011

Closing date for application 31<sup>st</sup> March

### Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2011

Closing date for application 31<sup>st</sup> May

You may attend any or all of the three days.

A selling exhibition held in the main central square in York for Pottery and Fine Art. Potters are supplied with a 6ft table and 2 chairs, painters with screens. An open sided marquee is to be provided. The cost is £25 per day.

For one extra table add £25 per day (maximum two tables per potter). This year 10% of any sales will be donated to a charity chosen by the Art Festival Committee which will be announced

at a later date.

These exhibitions are open to all members of the York Art Society and Northern Potters Association. Potters are welcome to demonstrate - hand-build or bring a wheel, but please contact me first so suitable arrangements can be made.

Applications forms are available now for the May weekend. Forms for the July date will be available in May. For either set of forms send an A5 S.A.E. at the appropriate time. Alternatively, those attending the May event can pick up their July forms then.

Please remember to tick the appropriate box if you require two tables.  
For application forms please send A5 S.A.E.s (but not cheques) to:-

Andrea Cundell, 4 Cranbrook Road, Acomb, York, YO26 5JA, t: 07746 288809

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## Book Review - Roger Bell

### ADVANCED POTTERY

Publ: Robert Hale

Linda Bloomfield

£35.00

Two firsts for me with this review – a new author and a new publisher. Robert Hale have only one other book on ceramics available but plenty on jewellery, so perhaps we can expect more. Linda Bloomfield trained as a materials scientist but now sells her own thrown tableware and has written articles for Ceramic Review.

Traditional chapters are included in a fairly standard order (Clay, Hand-Building, Moulding, Throwing, Tableware Design, Glazing, Decoration and Firing). So what makes this book different? Has it got a Unique Selling Point?

It has with the use of many photo sequences of working methods, which many people find easier than lengthy text. Effort has also gone into providing photos of work and methods by a very wide range of potters, some well known, others not. A few are NPA members. Most photos are of good quality and not so large as to overwhelm the text. But of two pictures of crackle glazed ware, only one shows any crazing. Also, although the crackle is intended, they are included in the section 'glaze faults'.

One book of nearly 200 pages cannot cover all the methods, techniques and technicalities of 'advanced pottery' in any detail. The only major omission is the human and animal form, with just one image of two figures in an 'arbour group' by Paul Young. The book is aimed at those with a good basic knowledge, to give sufficient information to start down new paths. In short, there are several equivalent books currently available, but if you have not got one, this, being the most up to date is probably the best buy.

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Kilnlinings is a new company offering firebricks, insulation bricks, ceramic fibre and much more.

The proprietor, Liam Turner, was shown a copy of NPA News by one of our members, and decided to get in touch and place an advert with us (see page 17). He's offering a generous 10% discount to NPA members, so do remember to mention it if you're making a purchase.

Liam says 'Kilnlinings provide an excellent service to the smaller industries where materials are used in heat insulation and heat loss prevention applications. These include kilns, furnaces, forges, wood burning stoves and many more applications. Kilnlinings has been established for almost a year now, and the response and feedback from individuals and companies alike, to what we do, has been fantastic.

Kilnlinings, hold a vast range of products such as Firebricks, Insulation Bricks, Ceramic Blankets, Castables, Cements and much more. If you don't see the product you are looking for on the website we are just a phone call / e-mail away and I am very confident we will be able to assist you.

We offer a full range of cutting facilities on site for made to measure items, whether it be bricks, tiles or cast blocks and can provide moulds for cast products upon request.

I really appreciate the continued support and look forward to assisting you with your project very soon.

For all pricing and to view our extensive product range please visit our website.'

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

[info@kilnlinings.co.uk](mailto:info@kilnlinings.co.uk)

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## NPA - What it's for - Barbara Wood

When I included Geoff Cox's article '*NPA - What's it for?*' in the previous issue, I expected he'd get a few replies, some grumbling that NPA doesn't do anything for them, but maybe also some saying how much they appreciated what NPA does - the network it provides to allow them to meet other mudslingers, exhibit in some prestigious galleries, get expert answers to technical questions. Wishful thinking? Apparently so. There were only two replies, and they were complaints about specific instances where they felt NPA had let them down. Nobody, not one of our 411+ members, felt it worth mentioning the positive influence of NPA - and nobody offered to get involved with NPA at Potfest!

Geoff's question 'why did *you* join?' is one we often ask. We encourage members to let us know what they want, either via committee members or their regional coordinators, but the vast majority seem content to get their newsletter and pay their subs without ever raising their voices. If you're happy with that, fine, but if you're not happy we'd like to do something about it.

I joined the committee at the beginning of 2004, when the organisation was at a crisis point due to apathy. A rallying call from the Treasurer got my attention, and I went along to the 2003 AGM with a couple of friends who also volunteered. At that time I was 'exhibitions assistant', although within a year the Secretary moved on, so I also took on that role. Not so satisfying artistically, but relatively straightforward and one I felt I could carry out adequately. That made me custodian of the official minutes from almost 30 years' worth of meetings, most of them laboriously hand-written in a red-backed notebook. How grateful I was that we'd moved on to word processing and email, but it showed how much time and effort had been invested in this organisation, and I was determined to do what I could to keep it going.

Since then I have been exhibitions officer, and now newsletter editor, and somehow have become the longest serving current committee member. I look forward to standing down, and handing over to someone with fresh ideas and more energy than I have, but I would hate to think I hadn't done everything I could to secure NPA's future. I know that may sound dramatic, but we on the committee do take it seriously, and do as much as we can to support the members. We want more dialogue with members but we can't force it.

A lot of our systems have been improved - we no longer require members to deliver pots for possible selection for exhibition, but accept the applications electronically, and encourage selected participants to get together to share transport to and from galleries. The regional groups can organise events in their own areas, (open to all members) with support from NPA when necessary, and can help publicise members' activities to generate additional interest.

The website is one area where we have not yet succeeded in achieving what we aim to do (see page 20), but we are well aware of it, and are taking steps to remedy it.

The NPA is financially sound, and in the past we have tried to invest some of our assets in the members. We used to organise weekend potters camps, but the last one, planned for 2004, had to be cancelled as there were not enough bookings to cover costs (by several thousand pounds!) For the 30th anniversary we suggested organising a party weekend, just for members, but even though NPA would have paid for the venue and catering there was little response.

On every letter that I send out on behalf of NPA, I include the following phrase at the bottom 'Northern Potters Association is a not-for-profit organisation run by a committee of volunteers'. It's important not to forget that. It is only the goodwill of members who offer to join the committee that keeps it going, and the value of that input should not be underestimated. There have been many of them, and they have all played a role in getting us here, the largest regional potters group.

After 33 years, I think we're doing pretty well considering.

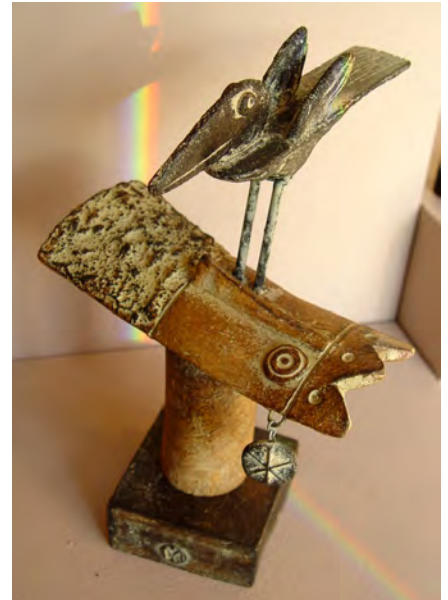
## A Potter's Moll writes... - Liz Robison

Early in December we visited The Barn Gallery in Southall, Notts. It is run by Peter Dworok, who many readers will remember as the director of the Craft Centre at Rufford. The building itself is lovely with high exposed beams and a wall of window means that light floods in. Peter sells his paintings and prints of the Lake District and Scottish islands and has recently branched out into stained glass. There is a pleasant selection of contemporary ceramics for sale as well as new work by John Maltby. Well worth a visit.

Encouraged by Peter we set out to walk up the town to see Southall Minster. I am ashamed to say I had never heard of this wonderful satellite to York Minster, like Beverley and Ripon. What a gem! The nave is vast and beautiful and the carving in the chapter house is exquisite and all in a green field setting just off one of the main shopping streets. In fact I asked someone in the street 'Are we near the Minster yet?' and she replied 'Yes, about three feet away.'

December snow prevented us visiting Debbie Loane's Lund Gallery between York and Ripon where we wanted to see the exhibition *Scratching the Surface* featuring work by Northern Potters Association member, Barbara Wood. They probably had problems with people not being able to get there because of adverse weather conditions, as we did. The year 2010 had four months when snow disrupted trade.

Therefore, thank goodness for commissions. Our friend, Ian Marsh, bought two ceramic stools last year for the garden of his new home in North Wales, then decided he would like a table to go with them: always a challenge to get clay to stay flat through all the various processes.



John Maltby



Jim has spent four tiring days in a local high school recently trying to show and enable groups of Year 10 pupils to understand and make pieces featuring the technique of layering. (A GCSE question featured Jim's name as one of several artists using the technique.) The 'liveliness' of the students and their symbiotic relationships with their mobile phones has made him question whether perhaps it may be better in future to 'pass the parcel' to people who want to know! There was a fruitful passing of said parcel last week when a student doing an MA at Newcastle work-shadowed for three days, working in the studio and doing two school visits as well as acquiring an elderly pug mill.

Too late, because invites were printed and ads paid for, our son pointed out that the title of our Christmas exhibition, (Slab Techniques, to coincide with publication of same name book,) was slightly less of a sales magnet compared with something more dynamic and seasonal. Live and learn.

We had a visit to Arteria Gallery in Lancaster to deliver work for the forthcoming Northern Potters' Association West exhibition, *Tea Party*. It is always interesting to see other galleries in operation and this one is very bright and pleasant with a gift shop downstairs and an exhibition space on the first floor.

On then to Morecambe on a sparkling day. The seafront looks very spruce these days with lovely marine life related designs set into the walkways, including some beautiful cast concrete circles representing the moon's cycles (and therefore the wave patterns on the sands.) Gordon Young is the artist who was commissioned to do this work, along with striking representations of seabirds on the roundabouts approaching the sea front.

The Eric Morecambe memorial is fun and very well done and on a more sombre note there is a stone memorial to the Chinese cockle pickers who drowned in Morecambe Bay. A large metal sculpture backs on to the stunning view across the bay silhouetting the points of interest that can be seen across the water, with Helvellyn the highest point.

This week we visited Gallery Oldham and in the foyer there is a showcase showing old and new pots in blue and white porcelain. The 'new' pot was a memorial to the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers by Paul Scott. It had been part of an exhibition last year, *Fired up: Ceramics and Meaning*, which brought together ceramic artists who work with clay as a medium to engage with the political and social issues of our time.



'Old. and Sad.' as the media dubbed the local constituency during the recent by-election certainly does not describe Gallery Oldham: it is vibrant, bright, relevant and informative. One gallery featured an exhibition called *Light, Passion, Darkness* curated by SHISHA, an international agency for contemporary South Asian crafts and visual arts. Paintings, sculpture, photography and film all featured. We especially liked the Loretta Braganza piece of polished slipware with incised patterns which the gallery has recently acquired for its (comprehensive) collection. Halima Cassell exhibited a piece called Blackburn on the Hill, unglazed ceramic inspired by the local landscape of geometrical rooftops on the northern side of the town with rows and rows of terraced houses.



Loretta Braganza

Halima Cassell

The main reason for our visit was in another of the galleries: *A Collector's Life: The Story of Francis Buckley*. He was a collector from Saddleworth who became an expert on subjects as wide-ranging as English glass and Neolithic flints and generously gave his collections to many galleries, including Oldham and the Tolson Memorial Museum in Huddersfield.

Buckley worked as a solicitor in London before the First World War then the sinking of the Lusitania encouraged him to enlist. (There is a great Crest china model of Lusitania in a showcase with other war memorabilia.) He discovered flints in the trenches which was the beginning of a life-long passion for archaeology. He became later known as an antiquarian and his collections were eclectic in the extreme. Viz: Chinese bottles and vases from the period 1723-1795, A Chinese pottery horse from 581-618 AD. Many tomb items were apparently discovered in China as excavations for the railways were being made.



Lusitanis

He also became fascinated with Chinese porcelain made for foreign markets in Europe and Turkey. Buckley had inherited a family fortune and did work as a JP but his real passion was collecting.

What a fascinating way to spend a January day and the sunshine on the moorland scenery on the return journey made it truly a food-for-the-soul-day.

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## Diary

until 9 March	EDAN (East Durham Artists Network) exhibition, including NPA member Victoria Leeks, Greenfields Community and Art Centre, Newton Aycliffe. <a href="http://greenfield-arts.co.uk">greenfield-arts.co.uk</a>
5 - 27 March	<b>Gus Wright Exhibition</b> , Meeting Room Gallery, South Square Centre, Thornton, Bradford, <a href="http://southsquarecentre.co.uk">southsquarecentre.co.uk</a>
19 March - 7 May	<b>LACi exhibition</b> , Towneley Hall Museum & Art Gallery, Rawtenstall <a href="http://burnley.gov.uk/towneleyinfo/17/towneley_hall">burnley.gov.uk/towneleyinfo/17/towneley_hall</a>
26 March	<b>'Loosen Up - East Meets West'</b> 1 Day demonstration by John Dix Solway Ceramics Centre - <a href="http://solwayceramicscentre.org.uk">solwayceramicscentre.org.uk</a>
1 - 3 and 8 - 10 April	<b>York Open Studios</b> , includes several NPA members and many other artists—see small ad. <a href="http://yorkopenstudios.co.uk">yorkopenstudios.co.uk</a>
5 April - 30 September	<b>From the Earth</b> - sculptures in wood by Gordon Baddeley, and clay by Roger Bell, Café in the Forest, Grizedale, Hawkshead, Cumbria
11 April - 17 June	<b>Alchemy</b> , Exhibition, RBSA Gallery, 4 Brook St, Birmingham, B3 1SA, featuring NPA member Alex Shimwell, <a href="http://rbsa.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/alchemy/">rbsa.org.uk/whats-on/exhibitions/alchemy/</a>
21 April - 4 June	<b>Northern Stars</b> , NPA selected exhibition at New School House Gallery, Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PW, <a href="http://schoolhousegallery.co.uk">schoolhousegallery.co.uk</a>
22 April - 22 May	<b>Out of the Earth II</b> , NENPA exhibition, Crook Hall Gardens, Frankland Lane, Sidegate, Durham DH1 5ST, <a href="http://crookhallgardens.co.uk">crookhallgardens.co.uk</a>
1 - 7 May	<b>National Ceramics Week</b> - numerous events celebrating ceramics! see <a href="http://craftanddesign.net">craftanddesign.net</a>
28 May - 27 August	Mixed exhibition including 'chair sculptures' by Roger Bell - Maiden Bridge Arts Centre, Tatham, Lancs.
10 - 12 June	<b>Potfest Scotland</b> , Scone Palace, Perth - <a href="http://potfest.co.uk">potfest.co.uk</a>
13 - 17 June	5 day throwing course with John Stroomer, Solway Ceramics Centre - <a href="http://solway-ceramicscentre.org.uk">solway-ceramicscentre.org.uk</a>
24 - 26 June	<b>Earth &amp; Fire</b> , Rufford Country Park, nr Ollerton, Notts. NG22 9DF
11 - 15 July	5 day throwing course with John Stroomer, Solway Ceramics Centre - <a href="http://solwayceramicscentre.org.uk">solwayceramicscentre.org.uk</a>
21 - 24 July	<b>Art in Action</b> , Waterperry House - <a href="http://artinaction.org.uk">artinaction.org.uk</a>
29 - 31 July	<b>Potfest in the Park</b> , Hutton-on-the-Forest, nr Penrith - <a href="http://potfest.co.uk">potfest.co.uk</a>
2 - 4 August	Raku glazing & firing course with John Scott, Solway Ceramics Centre - <a href="http://solwayceramicscentre.org.uk">solwayceramicscentre.org.uk</a>
5 - 7 August	<b>Potfest in the Pens</b> , Penrith - <a href="http://potfest.co.uk">potfest.co.uk</a>
15 - 19 August	Altering and decorating thrown forms - 5 day course with John Calver, Solway Ceramics Centre - <a href="http://solwayceramicscentre.org.uk">solwayceramicscentre.org.uk</a>
22 - 26 August	Decorative Earthenware - 5 day course with Paul Young, Solway Ceramics Centre - <a href="http://solwayceramicscentre.org.uk">solwayceramicscentre.org.uk</a>

## John Egerton - Shirley Sheppard

John has been working at his craft in North Yorkshire for 45 years and raised two sons with his wife Liz. After persuading his parents to allow him to set up his first pottery in one of their outbuildings, progress was slow, money short and there were far fewer galleries prepared to "take a chance" on a young unknown potter. But his work has developed over forty years to the point where it is very recognisably his own personal style.

Actually, as John himself is the first to mention, he would not be potting at all if it had not been for a modest inheritance, which funded him through his early years. Equally important was the crucial financial contribution made by his wife working for 20 years to help raise their sons. It is not easy to make a living as a potter, and as any professional potter will tell you, the support of family is necessary and cannot be praised enough.



John studied Design at Scarborough College of Art then trained as a teacher in London at Hornsey College of Art. This solid art background is evident in his exceptional ability to draw/sketch anything accurately on the round thrown surface. The design skills developed at Art School are now incorporated into the glazing process, and are particularly evident in his land and seascape plates.

Initially, in 1965 at his pottery in Sneaton, he made thrown earthenware, but in the 70's he changed to oxidized stoneware thus broadening the range, size and glazes available. His process involves applying one or more glazes to bisque-ware and then his design is drawn through this onto the pot surface. Extra glaze can then be painted or poured onto the pot and it is fired a second time. Only two or three new glazes have been added over the years, and by mixing these, adding oxides or simply over-glazing he achieves the results he is looking for.

John admits that by sticking to this process he misses out on many alternatives such as reduction firing, raku, porcelain and salt glazes, but he is happy with his chosen method and continues to discover new outcomes. Last winter when it was so cold outside in the workshop he experimented in hand-building and cut stamps from kiln bricks to press into the clay creating a range of Whitby scenes, but the majority of his work is thrown.

When I asked John for a "potter's tale" he supplied me with this one: "Teapots are one of the hardest things a potter makes because they not only need to look good but also work well. I remember, with some embarrassment, that one of my teapots was given as a wedding present. Unfortunately I had forgotten to test that it poured well and the newly weds discovered it would not pour at all because the holes had filled with glaze. Since the person giving the gift was known for his practical jokes they thought it was another of his pranks. Needless to say the couple got another teapot that worked."

For those of you who don't know John personally, his warm, generous and unassuming personality and his amazing pots, make knowing him a real pleasure, and after 45 years of potting, using more than 3 tons of clay a year his small frame must hide some pretty good muscles! At 70 he enjoys the whole pottery world far too much to retire so continues not only to create but three times a week runs workshops for fellow potting enthusiasts. He believes he is just beginning to get the hang of it all - *"Life isn't perfect but good enough for me!!"*



I first met John in 2002, when I was looking for artists to put work in our fledgling Blandscliff gallery. It is now 9 years later and John will be the guest potter for our celebratory 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary opening this year. The first works John supplied were mugs, bowls, vases – all wonderfully executed, but when we had the “Drawing Shakespeare” exhibition in 2004 I simply went WOW!

Since then my personal favourites are these, drawn on pieces, often with a great sense of humour and his wine goblet, whose surface my hands thoughtfully stroke every time I enjoy a glass or two.



## Welcome To New Members

Ellen Barker	Sheriff Hutton, York
Helen Brown	Littleover, Derbys
Catherine Bull	Bentley, Doncaster
Terrence Bunce	Marton, Blackpool
Karen Dodgson	Thornton, Lancs
Karen Free	York
Graham Glynn	Grange over Sands, Cumbria
Helen Graham	Markington, Harrogate
Laura-Jane Hancock	Westerton, Co.Durham
Marvin Kitshaw	Blaydon-on-Tyne, Tyne and Wear
Paul Nugent	Darlington, Co. Durham
Jacqui Seddon	Chester
Ruby Sharp	Amersham, Bucks
Alex Shimwell	Matlock, Derbys
Jeanette Slingsby	Leeds, W.Yorks
Dawn Whitton	Pocklington, E. Yorks
Matt Wilcock	Barton, Lancs

A warm welcome is extended to our new members. We look forward to seeing you and your work at future events.

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## A Career in Clay - Veronica Ballan

I was thrown into ceramics when I took up teaching art in Oldham in 1974. I was placed in the pottery room and told, 'This is where you will teach'. I discovered what a wonderful medium clay is to work with, and as a fine artist, not a potter, hand building was the only method suitable for me from then on.

After seven years service, I left teaching to become a full time ceramic artist, and have never looked back, that is, until I found a file of archive photographs whilst tidying the office. The first image could easily go into the 'first and worst pot' section of the NPA magazine. It is a sculpture I did of 'lovers', whilst still teaching.



Lovers, 1979

My earliest pieces of figurative work were done as teaching aids to inspire the kids, and I was lucky enough that whoever saw them, wanted to buy them. As a result of so much interest, I created a range of what became known as the 'Faceless Ladies', although it included lovers and children. By 1981 I had my own fully equipped workshop and home in an old village school in Northumberland, where I also ran a retail gallery.

In 1982, I attended the BCTF (British Craft Trade Fair) in Harrogate for the very first time. The picture shows how very basic those early days displays were, as this was only the second year that the BCTF had been going as an independent show. Metres of hessian, pegboard walls and rush mats were the order of the day. A stream of crafts people could be seen traipsing off to the local supermarket to buy rush mats, folding chairs and pot plants for their stalls. It was all so wonderfully chaotic and ad hoc in those days. We became more professional as the years went by. The atmosphere of excitement was genuine and the response from customers was overwhelming.



bctf 1982

Over the next few years, I managed to fit in the birth of a daughter, followed four years later, by the birth of twin daughters, working right up to both events and continuing to make whilst in hospital and immediately after. Life was very busy, hectic and full with all the

---

usual ups and downs, plus a few, with continued dependency on the BCTF for bringing in new orders each year.

Despite starting up as a self employed ceramicist during a recession, and surviving a second recession during the early 1990's, and now, into the third, the demand is still greater than I have time to supply. You'd think I'd be rolling in it, but somehow it doesn't work out like that, but I am grateful to have had plenty of work over the last thirty years, and to have enough money for the life I want.



Twins into mischief, 1990

I attended the very first Poffest in Penrith many years ago. I think it was in June, rather than August, difficult to do given my situation, but I enjoyed it very much as a way of meeting like minded others. I found the atmosphere invigorating and inspiring. After the date was changed to August, I was unable to do it for a number of years, as my children were too young to bring, and too young to be left home alone.

Ten years ago marked my return to Poffest Penrith and my first Poffest Perth; and subsequently I have attended these and all the additional ones since, making many new friends along the way. This also was

the start of a new phase in my life when I met Peter, and we left The Old School, workshop/gallery behind and moved to Alnwick, where we have a small workshop studio at the back of our beautiful Georgian town house. With his help and encouragement, I started sculpting hairy animals, which have taken over from the figures and I'm still developing new designs and possibilities, supplying galleries and craft shops all over the British Isles, and making many wonderfully unusual commissions for private buyers.

We are now busy preparing for my thirtieth BCTF, with all the hopes and fears that happen every year.



Hairy animals



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## Members' Gallery

Let me have images of your latest work for inclusion in the members' gallery - Ed





- 1: Gus Wright - **Babbling Brook**, stoneware, luna slip under white glaze
- 2: Anne Turner - **Tree Platter**
- 3: Jim Simpson - **Vision**
- 4: Victoria Leeks - **Pot Art**, slip cast, porcelain paper clay with copper wire inclusions, fired to 1220°C
- 5: David Orme
- 6+7: Alex Shimwell - **Teapot, Fruit bowls**, Valentines special porcelain, tenmoku, celadon inside, gas fired cone 9
- 8: David Wright



## Curator's Corner - Helen Walsh

### New Pots

It is increasingly difficult for public museums and galleries to buy new works for collections- acquisition budgets are shrinking and competition for awards from funding bodies is strong. Many new acquisitions come in the form of gifts from generous donors. In the past month, we have received pots from a local collector and from some makers.

The first gift is a group of eleven pieces from a collector living near to York. Trained as a potter and later a textile artist, the pots she has given are especially interesting as they are things that have been in use for the past 30-40 years. They bear the marks of their use in the cracks and careful repairs, showing both the functionality of studio pottery and how highly they were valued. The gift includes pieces by John Maltby, Takeshi Yasuda, Andrew Young, Mick Casson, Wally

and Madoline Keeler and a woven wall hanging by Peter Collingwood. With the exception of Madoline Keeler, all of these makers already feature in York's collection, but these new pieces offer fresh insights into their work.



Handled pot ©John Maltby/York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery)



Teapot ©John Maltby/York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery)



Teapot ©Takeshi Yasuda/York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery)

The second gift is a work called 'Conversation Jugs' and was made by textile artist Alice Kettle and potter Alex McErlain. Comprising two inscribed jugs on an embroidered cloth, the work marks the beginning of Alice and Alex's collaborative work together which involved them exploring each other's materials and trying different ways of producing work. A later example of their work, 'Ceres Jug', can currently be seen in our 'Honest Pots' exhibition at York Art Gallery. This will shortly be replaced though as we put 'Conversation Jugs' on display for the first time in York.



Pot ©The Estate of Michael Casson/York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery)

With storage and display space becoming tighter, we have to be more and more careful about what we acquire. Whilst we do have plans to extend and provide more display space for collections, much of our collection is in store and accessible by appointment. Gone are the days of uncontrolled collecting or acquiring something simply to fill a gap, nowadays acquisitions have to be able to play a more active role in the life of the gallery.

There's always room for one more though...



Helen is Assistant Curator of Decorative Art, York Museums Trust.

'Conversation Jugs' ©Alice Kettle and Alex McErlain/York Museums Trust (York Art Gallery)

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## Wood Fired Kiln Build - Bob Park

Wood fired kiln build August 2010

Bob Park, Hartley Fold, Hartley, Kirkby Stephen, Cumbria

The intention was to build a kiln similar to a 35 cu ft soda kiln built at Greystoke in 2007, and my main kiln then which was 55 cu ft., built in 2000. It was a modified Fred Olsen fast fire kiln design - which lives up to its name as I was able to fire the 55 cu ft kiln in 10 - 12 hours to cone 9 by myself. Because the 2 opposed fire boxes are under the chamber it is a very efficient design. The choice of 40 cu ft for the build is about the smallest size for maximum efficiency - wood has a flame length of about 7 ft so almost all the energy is contained in the chamber not shooting up the chimney. The flame speed is low so there are fewer un-burnt embers carried into the chamber and deposited onto the pots (an effect known as green snot by some potters).

The build time was intended as 5 days (the soda kiln was built in 3 days with 8 helpers), but as it rained almost every day it eventually took 10 days to complete. When my anorak leaked I gave up!!



The base layer was hard firebrick laid as level as possible on a concrete slab onto which the square of first wall and firebox bricks were placed. The firebox is built of hard bricks inside the outer wall of soft insulating bricks - unlike the original design - so that any damage caused by stoking can be replaced without dismantling the whole kiln. The fire bars for this build were welded tube onto angle - a change from the original 3 inch props as I regularly managed to break some of them whilst stoking. Another change was making the perforated base of the firebox from crank tiles instead of buying kiln shelves. During the firing, embers from the wood falling onto these red hot tiles burn away - pre heating the air coming from below - and at the end of the firing the only residue is about a quarter of a bucket of ash.

Between the fireboxes is the flue which runs the length of the kiln and then angles away to the brick/steel chimney. Building the fireboxes is the slowest part of the build up to the floor of the chamber - kiln shelves resting on the firebox walls with a 7 inch gap into the chamber. I use a concrete kerb block cutter, as it's really easy, to fit the hard bricks in the fireboxes - I can't cut bricks accurately by hand and end up with loads of miss-shaped ones - the block cutter cuts the bricks cleanly and I don't think I lost a single brick. These bricks are dipped into a fireclay slip, as they are placed, to give them a firm bed. To simplify the build the outer wall is made up of whole bricks so there is no cutting except for the door.



With the fireboxes complete the corner ironwork was put up and checked for vertical and bolted together with long rods. These came from the kiln at Greystoke with hinges already welded on for the firebox doors. On top of the ironwork a roof of ply was added - after that, we, and the kiln were quite dry. The rest of the chamber is just putting the bricks up the inside until the chamber is up to arch height. At this point the thrust plates (3 inch angle iron) were bolted to the frame to take the outward pressure of the arch. A curved arch former was made from plywood to support the arch bricks and propped in place from inside the chamber. The arch bricks were added a row at a time on each side to balance the weight on the former. These bricks were from the old kiln which had a slightly different arch so thin fillets of bricks were added to allow for this. With the arch in place the former was eased



down, until the arch supports itself and then taken out through the door. The flue to the chimney has a row of bricks which can be slid out to reduce the suck up the chimney - a subtractive damper, instead of a kiln shelf across the flue. The chimney was built up to about 5 feet and a steel cap which fits over the bricks and supports the 3 meter, 40cm dia steel chimney. Stays were added to stop it blowing over in strong winds. The final cover on the outside of the chamber, except for the door, was 6mm ceramic fibre with a 4mm insulating board. As this kiln has been built with bricks from both my previous kilns they are not as tight a fit as new bricks and the extra 6mm of fibre will cover any small holes between them. The arch was covered with 25mm fibre blanket.



The first firing, in October, went very smoothly if a little fast. The top cone 9 was down in eight and a half hours. Something of a record for me, but really too fast for my glazes. About half the kiln was perfect with a quarter under fired and a quarter over fired. The second firing in November took a little longer at 10 hours. This firing only had a small number of pots which will need to be refired and my chun glazes are back to their usual quality.



This kiln, like the one at Greystoke, is available to potters who may wish to try their glazes and pots in a woodfired kiln, or just to come and help with a firing.



*Bob Park can be contacted by email – [b.park@virgin.net](mailto:b.park@virgin.net)*

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## MAAC - Forthcoming Events

### "Gallery Owners" Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2011

Time : 2.00 – 5.30 pm

Venue : NCVO, 8 Regent's Wharf, All Saint's Street, London, N1 9RL.

Nearest Railway Station : King's Cross

#### **Speakers :**

Yvonna Demczynska (Flow Gallery, Notting Hill, London)

Stuart Dickens (Bevere Gallery, rural Worcestershire)

David Binch (Oakwood Ceramics, online Gallery)

Tickets: £18 non-members; £16 – LP&CPA members;

£14 students

Contacts for details and tickets:

CPA Members: Jane Boughton, t: 01494 62991

e: [jane@boughton.org](mailto:jane@boughton.org) , LP Members: Fay de Winter e:

[faydewinter@hotmail.com](mailto:faydewinter@hotmail.com)

A presentation by leading gallery owners, followed by a discussion.

#### **Future events**

We are working on a number of new events for the coming year but if you have any ideas for a talk, slideshow, demonstration, or workshop or any other events related to ceramics, that you think would be of interest, please let us know. If you have any suggestions please e-mail or ring up any committee member. Or, if you prefer, you can send your suggestions/ comments etc by post to :-

The MAAC Committee, c/o Craft Potters Association,

63 Great Russell Street, London, WC1B 3BF

Tel 020 3137 0750

#### **MAAC Committee Members for 2011**

Michael Jones – Chairman [mike\\_a\\_jonze@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mike_a_jonze@yahoo.co.uk)

tel: 01384 255 867

John Masterton – Secretary

[john@jmasterton.freemove.co.uk](mailto:john@jmasterton.freemove.co.uk) tel: 01279 723 229

Veronica Newman - Publicity Coordinator [veronica@veronicanewman.co.uk](mailto:veronica@veronicanewman.co.uk) tel: 0033 562 07 87 20

Joy Bosworth

Richard Ballantyne

Harriet Coleridge

Ian Marsh

David Wright

We now have several new committee members whose names and contact details will be published in the next Newsletter.

#### **MAAC is the Members and Associates Council (of the Craft Potters Association)**

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## NPA Website

We are aware that our website, [www.northern-potters.co.uk](http://www.northern-potters.co.uk), is not currently serving its purpose, and we ask you to be patient for a little longer while we deal with it.

We are in discussion with the provider, and hope to establish a satisfactory way of ensuring that information, particularly members' details, is maintained in a more timely manner. The website should be a valuable tool for all of us to market our work and events that we are participating in, but for a number of reasons we haven't been making good use of it.

By the time the next issue comes out, we will have resolved the problems, and will give full instructions on what members should do, but in the meantime, please do not submit any more information for inclusion.

## Influences - Steve Booton

It's a strange fact that pivotal moments in our personal and creative lives can only be viewed with benefit of hindsight. How a chance encounter or being in a particular place at a particular time can have a dramatic effect on the creative process and journey all artists are on. While writing this, I can think of three instances that have brought me to where I am now.

Firstly, I strongly believe that the fact that I spent my formative years, (1960 - 74) holidaying in St.Ives, Cornwall, actually led me to ceramics. Creativity permeated the air from the lifestyle and music of the hedonistic hippies to the sculpture of Barbara Hepworth and Naum Gabo, painters like Peter Lanyon and Christopher Wood and of course the immeasurable influence that Bernard Leach and Shoji Hamada had on modern ceramics. I cannot remember a single instance, but to be in and around St.Ives during that time with the almost palpable creative atmosphere must have seeped into my pores as surely as standing under a shower!

The second instance that comes to mind I have written about previously in NPA News, (*Aug-Sept 06*). This also involved a visit to St.Ives in March 2006 for my daughter's wedding. I was passing time by showing my son a Hamada pot in a local gallery and explaining to him the history of St.Ives and its influences on art, ceramics in general, and me in particular. He commented on the fact that surely all the knowledge and training I had received was going to waste and why didn't I "practice what I preached". That specific conversation was the catalyst that led to my decision to return to ceramics after a prolonged absence.

Finally the most recent influence has been on my work., during a visit not to St.Ives this time, but to Majorca in 2009 for a family holiday. While relaxing by the pool I noticed a dragonfly floating on the water. Although dragonflies have always been a favourite of mine, I have only ever been able to get a fleeting sight as one darted past. The opportunity to study one up close was fantastic if tinged with sadness that

this beautiful creature needed to have died in order for me to study it closely. However, while I was drawing it, resting on my sketchbook in the sun, I saw the smallest of movements which resulted after a couple of hours in its complete reanimation. It finally regained enough strength and flew away. After returning home I developed the numerous drawings that I made that day, and now use a dragonfly as a major design motif in my work.

So there you have it - a few influences that have affected me and my work. There must be others which I cannot recall at this time but I am sure will become apparent with benefit of hindsight.



### NPA Membership

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£22 (if paid by standing order)  
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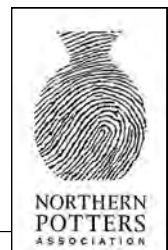
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(please send evidence of eligibility e.g. photocopy of SU card, UB40 etc.)

You can download a copy of the membership form from our website - [northern-potters.co.uk](http://northern-potters.co.uk).

**If any of your contact details change, remember to let us know**



Contact the membership secretary:

Margaret Lawrenson  
'Seven Firs', Kemp Rd,  
Swanland,  
E.Yorks  
HU14 3LZ  
Tel: 01482 634784  
E-mail: [margaret@sevenfirs.karoo.co.uk](mailto:margaret@sevenfirs.karoo.co.uk)



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**York Open Studios 2011**

Now in its 10th year, York Open Studios has extended to 2 weekends, and includes 119 artists.  
NPA members featured are:  
Catherine Boyne-Whitelegg, Andrea Cundell, Ann Decker, Isabel Denyer, Jill Ford, Peter Humpherson, Chris Utley, Marianne Von Tucka, Trudy Weir and Chiu-I Wu.  
Open Fridays 1 + 8 April, 6pm - 9pm  
Saturdays 2 + 9 April, 10am - 6pm  
Sundays 3 + 10 April, 11am - 5pm  
see [yorkopenstudios.co.uk](http://yorkopenstudios.co.uk) for full details

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## Regional News

It has been a fairly quiet time for many of the regional groups, and a couple of our coordinators are standing down. In the South West, Jan Lewis-Eccleston has completed her year with the successful exhibition at The Hive, Manchester, and has handed over the reins to Clive Weake. An enterprising group of members has established itself to work together in planning and realising events, so I am confident that they will continue to flourish.

In the East, Ann Decker has let us know she will be standing down in May, so we are looking for a replacement. The region has been most active around York, but also includes Harrogate, Leeds, and most of North, East and West Yorkshire, so it would be good to find someone from any one of these areas to take it on. Ann has 'coordinated' us through local exhibitions, selling and social events, and even organised a \*\*\*\*\*-up (that's 'knees') in a brewery. She has also ensured we have a few potential events in progress for National Ceramics Week.

Both Ann and Jan have done a good job, and the committee would like to thank them for their service. Hopefully, members will offer their individual thanks when they see them.

The role of regional coordinator is intended to be a point of contact for members organising local events to disseminate information to members - some seem to expect the coordinator to do the organising, and don't volunteer to do anything themselves. The most successful areas have a group of members willing to be involved, and don't rely on one person to do the bulk of the work. Some members have complained that their group isn't in the area where they live, so they can't get involved, but the group should try to cover the region it represents by moving meetings around. If you want a meeting near you, or an event, tell your coordinator, and they can spread the word to all of the members in the region. Don't wait to be asked!

When we started the regional groups it was in response to a perceived geographical problem - potters are generally sociable, and like to get together to do things, but don't always want to travel too far. Building a local identity is good for marketing, good for sharing techniques and resources, and better for the environment. If you're not getting what you want from the regional group, do something about it! Get in touch with your coordinator, tell them what you want to do, and ask them to tell the members. We have more than 400 members, most of them accessible by email, so you can get your message across fairly quickly. Whether it's organising an exhibition, or car sharing to see an exhibition, asking for kiln space or swapping glaze materials, someone out there probably wants to hear from you.

### North West

Co-ordinator: Roger Bell, Gale Mount, 11High Gale, Ambleside, Cumbria, LA22 0BG  
Tel: 015394 32730 E-mail: bell.roger@btinternet.com



For 2011 Mary Chapplehow is hoping to arrange the regular show at Keswick Museum which could not take place in 2010 because of refurbishment. Work is ongoing for the ceramics week in May coordinated by Craft & Design magazine. Open studios planned can be seen on the Potfest website for all the country and discussions can be followed on LINKEDIN for what else can be done.

Bob Park will be firing his new wood firing kiln for National Ceramics Week, so do get in touch with him if you want to put pots in, or help with the firing - b.park@virgin.net - see the article on page18.

As always it would be great to receive some more input from NW members as to what they would like organised and what they could help organise.

### North East

Co-ordinator: Geoff Proudlock, 46 Cleveland Terrace, Darlington, DL3 7HA  
Tel: 01325 353445  
Email: geoff@gproudlock.plus.com

Preparations are going well for the Crook Hall exhibition ( "Out of the Earth II" )



### East

Co-ordinator: Ann Decker  
Email: ann.decker1@btinternet.com  
Tel: 01904 788156

Six members met in February to generate ideas for potential events to take place during National Ceramics Week. Finding a venue and checking with members to gauge interest will be the next steps. An email is going out to the region outlining the proposed events and asking for feedback.

Besides these activities, members can do things on an individual level such as open studios. Everyone who participates can add their event details to the Craft & Design Month May 2011 web site [www.craftanddesignmonth.net](http://www.craftanddesignmonth.net) for free.



### South East

Co-ordinator: Brian Holland  
Email: brian.holland100@virgin.net  
Tel: 01909 724781

The SE group met on Sunday 6th at my studio. We are planning a site specific exhibition, Ceramics in The Cathedral, for Sheffield cathedral, preferably in November (date to be confirmed), and an Exhibition at Thoresby Gallery in August, again details to be confirmed. Please ask members to get in touch if they wish to be involved.

(ASAP as we wish to begin promotion and marketing in good time)



### South West

Co-ordinator: Jan Lewis-Eccleston  
Email: jle.ceramics@yahoo.co.uk  
Tel: 01625 263974

The group will be meeting on Friday 4th March at the Bull's Head, Fairfax Street, Manchester to discuss future plans, which so far include a two-week exhibition at the Civic Centre in Knutsford in August.

Also at this meeting, I shall be confirming my resignation from the post of regional co-ordinator, and handing over the baton to the very capable hands of Clive Weake [clive.weake@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:clive.weake@tiscali.co.uk)



### West

Co-ordinator: Dave Harper / Geoff Wilcock  
E-mail: dpharper@uclan.ac.uk / ghwilcock@uclan.ac.uk  
Tel: 01782 617801 or Tel: 01204 674901

Our members have work exhibited in the Tea Party Exhibition at Arteria Gallery, Lancaster. The opening was a great success with plenty of positive feedback. Geoff has put out an email for members who want to take part in our exhibition in the PR1 Gallery Uclan at the end of March. 22 so far!

We are looking forward to spring and the running of workshops, a Raku one already under discussion. The next meeting is on the 1st March 7.15 "Bitter Suite" Pub Preston. The theme for the Vessels is St Davids Day, I do try my best but Sainthood?



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## First or Worst - Rene Cryer

### The first pot no to collapse!

I hadn't touched clay until I went to college in 1960, and chose to do art as my main subject. The course gave us a session in each of the subjects on offer during the first of three years.

In the second year I dropped the textile work, and concentrated on art and pottery, but in the third year I concentrated on the pottery.



First pot

The first photograph is the first of my coil pots to survive both coiling and firing – and of which I was quite proud.

I took a practical exam (over a fortnight's work at a college in York) to become a member of the college of craft education. There were only two candidates taking the exam in pottery (most were doing woodwork or metalwork, and one other lady was doing beautiful things with textiles), and we couldn't have been more disparate in our style of work. He worked in the main area with the wheel and had produced a tea set in what seemed like no time at all. I asked to work on my own (as I normally do) and set about making a wall mural based on a chess set, which later went on the wall in the school at which I was then working. This had to be cut into sections and transported home in pieces and later fired and glazed in my own studio. As a matter of fact it is still on the wall and I see it when I go to give blood.

I also did a coil pot which was different to any I had done before – an asymmetrical pot – which set the trend for all sorts of other work – large sculptural garden pots and torsos of varying types.



The other photograph is to show another type of work which came after acquiring the skills to work the clay in any direction.

*Please send in your own 'first or worst' memories - Ed*



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cages

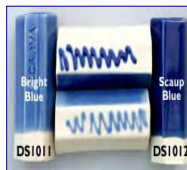


retro fitted  
control

built stronger to last longer

YouTube: northernkilns or pillingpottery

## If you use Clay - You need CTM Potters Supplies



Manufacturer of Contem Underglazes " Mail Order and Collection

Stockist of Valentine Clays & Scarva Earthstone Clays " Distributors for Spencroft & Potclays range of Clays

Materials " Frits " Rare Earths " Colouring Oxides " Tools & Equipment " Potters Wheels " Rohde Kilns

UG Pencils " Contem Underglazes " Raku & Crackle Glazes " Stains " Scarva E/W & S/W Glazes " Slips

Kiln Furniture & Shelves " Bead Stands " Brushes " Bisqueware & Bisque Tiles " Ceramic Fibre Blankets & Paper

5% discount to NPA members (excl. direct deliveries of clay, and machinery/kilns/wheels)

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

New downloadable catalogue on the website

Unit 10A, Millpark Ind Estate, White Cross Road, Woodbury Salterton, Exeter EX5 1EL 01395 233077

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Joanne Cooke -  
Scruffy Mutt

