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NPA NEWS

The magazine of the Northern Potters Association



May - June 2012

www.northern-potters.co.uk



In this issue:

A Paddle and Anvil Technique, Curator's Corner, Memories of Ray

Editor's Comment

Last Saturday I visited Ray and Coralin Pearson's home in Cumbria for the first time. Their setup at Solway Ceramics Centre is great for potting events - talks, demonstrations and workshops can all be accommodated, and the friendly welcome and delicious catering make for a most relaxing and energising environment. I was there for the NPA/SPA demonstration by American potter Adam Field, and it turned out to be a perfect weekend. Adam is very generous with sharing knowledge, and has worked hard to learn traditional skills from 5th generation onggi potters in Korea. His dedication (stubbornness?) is demonstrated by the fact that of the 500 large pots he produced in his year in Korea, only 2 made it into the kiln, and yet still he persevered. So far as we could tell, his pots were excellent, but apparently not quite good enough for the master potter. There would have been a report on it, but a: there's already a full issue, and b: my camera is refusing to give me the photos I took. Perhaps I can include it next time - meanwhile, I recommend that anyone who is interested should visit Adam's website - adamfieldpottery.com where several videos show much of the process.

It was a successful day for forging new links with SPA too. The event was attended by members from both associations in almost equal numbers, and the location certainly has the potential to be used again for similar events.

There are plenty of 'good reads' in this issue, and lots of diary dates, with a full page of Craft & Design Month events (p.18) as well as the more general diary page (p.8).

The Gordon Baldwin exhibition at York Art Gallery features in Helen Walsh's 'Curator's Corner' (p. 6), and Roger Bell reviews the book which accompanies it (p. 4). There's still time to visit the exhibition in York before it moves to its next venue in June.

Chris Jenkins has written about his visits to Thailand (p. 9), first to take part in an archaeological dig, and then to become involved in the process of setting up a pottery using traditional methods. The cooking pots produced using the 'paddle and anvil' technique are just the same as those being unearthed in burials, some dating back 4000 years.

Alex McErlain shares some memories of Ray Finch (p.12), a great potter / mentor / teacher who died earlier this year at the age of 97.

I am delighted that Ruth Charlton has agreed to take on the role of regional coordinator for NPA-NW. Ruth has been a supportive member of NPA for many years, and I am sure she will follow in Roger's footsteps in encouraging members in the region to get actively involved in the regional network.

Cover :

Anna Whitehouse - **Disc**
stoneware, 2011, 42cm high, including base

Barbara Wood

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in this issue

Editor's Comment		page 2
New Books	(Roger Bell)	page 4
Book Reviews	(Roger Bell)	page 4
Exhibitions and Events		page 5
Curator's Corner	(Helen Walsh)	page 6
Diary		page 8
A Paddle and Anvil Technique	(Chris Jenkins)	page 9
Memories of Ray	(Alex McErlain)	page 12
Ceramic Eggs for Easter Hunt		page 13
Members' Gallery		page 14
A Potter's Moll writes....	(Liz Robison)	page 16
Craft & Design Month events		page 18
Forty Years of Playing with Mud	(Carolyn Corfield)	page 19
New Members		page 20
NPA		page 21
Regional News		page 24
'Potters Don't Retire'	(Michèle Beverley)	page 26

next issue

To contribute to the next issue of NPA News, send your articles, comments and / or images to
Barbara Wood

by 25 June 2012

Please send between 300 and 1000 words, and send them as an **email attachment**, or on a cd, or in longhand. Email attachments are easiest for me to include, but I will re-type if absolutely necessary! High resolution (big jpeg files) digital images are preferred, as these give the best quality for printing, but I can scan photos. Low resolution (small files) digital images are the worst - they may be fine for websites, but don't have enough detail for a printed magazine. Send your **text** as a .doc file (or equivalent) - if it's a jpeg, or a pdf, it's not easy for me to edit it as necessary. Please send images as separate attachments, not embedded in the text, and preferably not zipped, on SkyDrive or anything similar that involves an extra process to make them accessible!

Make sure you have permission to use any images you send. Some galleries / artists will allow you to take photographs of their work for your own reference, but not for publication. If you are asked to include a copyright statement please send it to me and I will use it (e.g. all images provided by York Museums Trust include something like 'courtesy of Jane Hamlyn / York Museums Trust').

Text and images can be e-mailed to npanews@btinternet.com, sent on CD or in long hand with photographs to Old Mills, Seaton Ross, YORK, YO42 4NH.

New Books - Roger Bell

The Ceramics Book 3 rd Edition (CPA Members)	Ed Bonnie Kemske	10.00
The Cultural Aesthetics Of 18 th C Porcelain	Ed Alden Cavanough	65.00
Images: Critical & primary Sources 4 Vols	Ed Sunil Manghani	495.00
The Invention Of Craft	Glenn Adamson	16.99
Journal Of Modern Craft (3 issues a year)		
Lustre	Greg Daly	15.99
Picasso Ceramics: The Attenborough Collection	McCully & Raeburn	25.00
Potters And Patrons In Edo Period Japan	Andrew Maske	65.00
The Ceramic Art Of James Tower	Timothy Wilcox	45.00
The Workshop Guide To Ceramics	Hooson & Quinn	24.95

Book Reviews - Roger Bell

GORDON BALDWIN – Objects For A Landscape
Publ: York Museums Trust

Ed David Whiting
£31.00 posted

This beautifully produced volume has been produced to complement the current exhibition at the York City Art Gallery (finishing June 10th but moving on to Oldham). Although Baldwin has substantial sections in books on 'Studio Pottery', 'Contemporary Ceramics', 'The Abstract Vessel' and the like, this is the first full biography. Significantly the first volume in the book's bibliography is Herbert Read's 'A Concise History of Modern Sculpture' of 1964. For he is a sculptor who happens to use clay. His titles often include the word vessel, bowl, even bottle but the forms have more in common with Brancusi, Hepworth, Arp and others. He is quoted as being 'irritated' to be called a 'ceramic sculptor' where others working in bronze or wood were just 'sculptors'.

It is a substantial volume with 160 pages of 10" x 12". There are 80 full page photos of work dating from 1966 to the present, many of which are in the exhibition, plus some earlier work, photos of Gordon at work and relaxing plus 'inspirations' – coastal scenes and work by other sculptors.

The main essay is by David Whiting. It manages to combine the details of his development from school, through art school, to maker and teacher, with details of his influences and key biographical information. There is description of the development of his forms, use of colour and surface variation, all knitted together into a readable narrative. GB himself is given space to go through how imagination and influences interact with location, time and memory as pieces are developed. Tributes from students, friends and admirers include Emmanuel Cooper, Henry Rothschild and Anthony Shaw whose major collection has been loaned to York. Finally Dr Jeffrey Jones writes 'GB In Context' relating his work to its time, and other sculptors including those working in clay.

I look forward to visiting the exhibition in May. This book certainly enhances the sense of anticipation. York Museum Trust are to be congratulated on filling a gaping gap in biographies of sculptors and ceramicists.

THE CERAMICS BOOK (3rd Edition)
Publ: CPA

Ed: Bonnie Kemske
£10.00

A long gap from publication of the 2nd Edition means large numbers of potters dropping out and many more joining. From Billy Adam to Paul Young each full member receives with a single picture of work, a thumbnail portrait photo, contact details and up to 10 lines of text. To aid visiting there is a listing of contact details divided into 12 regions. It is interesting to speculate on why some well known clay workers such as Gordon Baldwin, Richard Batterham and Nic Collins are not members. Also, it is of note how membership declines as distance from London increases. The NE has just 2! Scotland and N. Ireland have few. Only the SW bucks the rule. An interesting and reasonably priced volume that is a must for collectors and of interest to many makers.

Exhibitions and Events - Lesley Nason

All Creatures Great and Small

Water Street Gallery, 25 Water Street, Todmorden, OL14 5AB

1 June until 1 July 2012

Open Wed - Sat, 9.30am - 5.30pm, Sun 11am - 3pm

A selected exhibition of work by 10 potters, inspired by the animal kingdom in form, pattern or image. A must for all animal lovers!

Preview: **Thursday 31st May 5.30pm – 8pm, all welcome.**



The exhibitors for all selected NPA exhibitions are chosen by a panel of 3 invited judges, these will change with each exhibition. It will usually consist of the gallery owner or manager of the venue hosting the exhibition, a non committee NPA member and a non NPA member who is either a respected potter/lecturer or specialist working in the area of ceramics.

One of the selectors for 'All Creatures Great and Small' was Alex McErlain a highly respected potter and lecturer in ceramics. He has kindly offered to share his thoughts on the selection process and the importance of submitting good images.



Selection Day

A visit to the Water Street Gallery to select work for the Northern Potters Association's forthcoming exhibition turned out to be an enjoyable experience for all concerned. The assembled team of three received the news that there had been only a modest number of submissions; however, as it turned out, quality made up for quantity and a good exhibition looks likely. The day began with a quick run through of all the submissions to get a feel for the quality and range. It was not long before we were convinced that there would be enough work to form an exhibition and we relaxed a little to look again in greater depth. Soon the familiar refrain at these gatherings was to be heard 'Oh I wish the image was of better quality'. So much effort has gone into making the work but it needs to be well photographed to come across quickly in a selection meeting. Rapidly a core of the exhibition was assembled as people indulged themselves admiring the best of the submissions and agreement on these was, as usual, without contention. In a similar way a few weak submissions were quickly put on the reject list, everyone expressing hope that given time the work might improve and better luck would come at a future event.

And so to the most lively part of any selection, the ones up for debate. This is where differing opinions are exchanged, one persuading another to look again and much pointing out of potential strengths (and more of 'I wish the image was better'). At last we are nearly there and we examine the selection for balance: in scale, type of work, price range and the all important saleability. Comments are proffered, 'that would look amazing in the window', 'I would love one of those for myself', 'it looks like we have a great exhibition'. Eventually the task is complete and we reflect on what feedback we might offer so I hope these few words may help give an insight into the process and an assurance that a fair chance was given to all the members who submitted.

Alex McErlain

Curator's Corner - Helen Walsh



'Vessel for Dark Air', 2003
© Gordon Baldwin/York
Museums Trust

In February, York Art Gallery launched its most ambitious ceramics exhibition yet. 'Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape' is the culmination of 5 years of planning and hard work. The aim of the exhibition was to celebrate the life and work of Gordon Baldwin. Gordon is one of the UK's most important sculptural potters, who for the last 60 years has been producing innovative work which blurs the boundaries between pottery, sculpture and painting.

Before we started the project, the only examples of Gordon's work I had come across were a few small pieces in the WA Ismay collection and the large, sinister 'Vessel for Dark Air' bought by the gallery in 2003. This was the first pot I saw when I began working at York Art Gallery in 2004 and to be honest it gave me the creeps, I had a feeling that if I put my hand inside something nasty would happen to it.

Working on the exhibition has been a complete revelation to me. I have been amazed at the volume and variety of work Gordon has produced. As packed as the exhibition is, it is still only a brief snapshot of his output.

I feel very fortunate to have worked with him on 'Excitations', the exhibition he curated for us (the show is on at York Art Gallery until the end of 2012).

Gordon chose pots by makers who had an impact on him when he was a student. His selection offers a fascinating insight into his development as an artist, showing a wide variety of interests from old pots like medieval jugs and Chinese Song ware, to the work of contemporary makers in the 1950s like

Hans Coper and Bernard Leach. Equally interesting are the labels which use his own words that I took from the letters he wrote to me as he chose which pieces he wanted to include. They reveal not only positive influences but also negative ones, showing how he took something from each artist to help him find his own way.



View of 'Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape' exhibition
© York Museums Trust

The exhibition is on at York Art Gallery until the 10th June and then tours to a further four or five venues across the UK. I'd encourage everyone to come and see it at York Art Gallery as the exhibition was designed for the space here by ceramist Martin Smith, so it includes all the objects and makes a very strong impact. It will be interesting to see how it changes at each of the tour venues.

York Art Gallery closes on the 31st December 2012 and heads into a major capital redevelopment. We have been earmarked to receive £3.5 million pounds from the Arts Council Capital Fund to add to money we have already raised and now only have a small amount left to find towards our £7.6 million project. A key part of the project is our desire to make our ceramics collection, now the largest in the UK thanks to the loan of the Anthony Shaw collection, more accessible to the public. Our plans include the creation of a further 60% of display space and part of this space will house a 'National Centre for British Studio Ceramics'. The name is still a cause for much head scratching - should it be ceramics or pottery? Visitors to York Art Gallery are invited to give their opinion on this and the rest of our plans in a new exhibition, which explores the history of the gallery and our plans for its future.

All Photos: Philip Sayer



View of 'Gordon Baldwin: Objects for a Landscape' exhibition
© York Museums Trust

Diary

- 5 May - 26 May NPA member Sylvia Holmes is exhibiting at **Bevere Gallery**, Worcestershire - beveregallery.com
- 6 May - 4 July **Fired by Nature** - Exhibition by NPA members Annette Cole and Carol Metcalfe - Kiplin Hall, nr Scorton, Richmond - kiplinhall.co.uk
- until 7 May **Contemporary Ceramics: A Personal Collection**, exhibition at Craven Museum & Gallery - www.cravenmuseum.org
- 18 May - 31 August **Summer Exhibition**, Maidenbridge Arts Centre, Tatham, Lancs, includes work by NPA member Sylvia Holmes
- until 21 May **Out of the Earth III** - NENPA exhibition at Crook Hall Gardens, Durham
- 21 May - 2 June **Exhibition of Sculptural Ceramics** by NPA member Ann Decker and paintings by Tim Pearce. Norman Rae Gallery, Langwith College, York
- 1 June - 1 July **All Creatures Great and Small** - NPA exhibition, Water Street Gallery, Todmorden
- 1 - 3 June **Potfest Scotland**, Scone Palace, Perth - potfest.co.uk
- 1 June - 12 August **Of a Twitter** - exhibition by NPA member Ruth Charlton plus Hans Ulrich, Alvin F Irving, John Calver. The Beach Hut Gallery, Kents Bank Station, LA11 7BB - thebeachhutgallery.co.uk
- 9/10 and 16/17 June **North Yorkshire Open Studios** - includes NPA members Elisabeth Bailey, Steph Black, Katie Braida, Jill Christie, Sylvia Holmes, Petra Lloyd, Fiona Mazza, Eric Moss and Anna Whitehouse - nyos.org.uk
- until 10 June **Ceramic Showcase**, featuring NPA members Dianne Cross, Eric Moss, Chris Utley and Trudy Weir, blue tree gallery, York
- until 10 June **Gordon Baldwin - Objects for a Landscape**, York Art Gallery, yorkartgallery.org.uk
- 22 - 24 June **Earth & Fire**, Rufford Abbey Country Park, Notts. Visit Steve Booton, Jackie Knight and Laura Manners on the NPA group stand
- until 14 July **Garden Party**, NPA-W exhibition, Gallery 23, Arteria, Lancaster
- 23-24, 30 June, 1, 7-8 July **Pots in the Byre**, Broadwood Hall, Allendale, broadwoodstudios.co.uk
- 6 - 8 July **Art in Clay**, Hatfield House
- 19 - 22 July **Art in Action**, Waterperry House, Oxfordshire, artinaction.org.uk
- 27 - 29 July **Potfest in the Park**, Hutton in the Forest, nr Penrith - potfest.co.uk
- 3 - 5 August **Potfest in the Pens**, Penrith - potfest.co.uk
- 16 Sept - 21 October **NPA exhibition** at Rufford Craft Gallery

Please send me details of events you think members would like to hear about - Ed

A Paddle and Anvil Technique - Chris Jenkins

I have been to the village of Ban Non Wat in northern Thailand to take part in the archaeological dig there three times now. It was a great experience - the 7 meter deep excavation in the centre of the village contained hundreds of burials together with many wonderful pots, dating back to the neolithic period, about 2000 BC.



The dig at Ban Non Wat, 2006

On the first two visits I was mainly concerned with ceramic conservation, reassembling large handbuilt pots from a bag of shards, something I particularly like doing that brings you into immediate contact with a potter from the past.

This year I was posted to the pottery which was established to complement the proposed site museum and tourist centre. I was initially very doubtful about my role and after looking round concluded that I was right, there was nothing I could offer, but a lot for me to learn.



Bronze Age pot from the dig

The potters were led by an elegant lady from a nearby pottery village who had taught a group of Ban Non Wat women how to make a traditional lidded cooking pot using the paddle and anvil technique. I found this fascinating, obviously the same process by which the pots I had been restoring previously had been made up to 4000 years ago.

The body

A local clay was prepared in the traditional way. A part mixed with rice husks was made into briquettes, fired, then crushed in a pestle and mortar to make a grog. This was added in one part to two parts clay. A batch was made up from dry every day, the mix treaded underfoot, then kneaded and used very soft. From most points of view it was a real pig, full of organic matter, very sticky, it shrank 10% drying though it had low plastic clay content, and was almost impossible to throw tearing apart at the earliest opportunity. However, it seemed that their making technique matched it well. The organic matter helped in the firing and left a black core in the clay making it dense and less absorbent.



Solid cylinders pinched top and bottom

Making

A solid cylinder of clay had a hole made in each end with a finger. It was then pinched out to make a thick tube. Next it was stuck on a log end at table height, further thinned with a hand inside and a paddle outside.

The lip was then "thrown" and finished by wetting then using a piece of plastic between the fingers on the top and walking backwards round the pot. I tried this slow motion throwing and found it very difficult!



Making the rim



Pots with completed rims ready for closing and shaping

After the lip had become touch dry in the sun, an anvil like a mushroom, made from fired clay, was held inside the pot. The bottom was closed and the walls thinned out beating against the anvil with a paddle from the outside.



Beating out the base and shaping



Paddles and anvils

The paddle and anvil are kept wet, and the pots left to stiffen a little before finishing. In a small piece the wall will be 2 to 3 mm thick when finished, and even in large 50 cm pots were rarely more than 5 mm.



Shaping and finishing the pots

Firing

The firing was an open bonfire, First a bed of branches approximately 5 cm thick were laid in parallel pointing to the prevailing wind another layer of the same on top, both interspersed with some finer branches.

The pots were then laid on top covered with smaller branches and large thin pieces of bark down the sides presumably to protect against draughts.

Finally a thick layer of rice straw covered the lot. It was lit from the windward end and left to burn, any gaps in the layer of straw ash being filled in as necessary. They usually fired in the morning unpacking the next day.

I have tried bonfire firing many times and have found it to be not as easy as it looks, yet they had very few casualties. This was partly due to the thin section of the pots, the thick bed of dry ash from previous firings, the hot dry weather, but mostly I think the insulating layer of rice straw ash.

The close relationship of the modern and prehistoric techniques is obvious the more you look. There are anvils of the same shape in early graves, the anvil texture on the inside of the pot and the pattern of the string bound beater on the outside, the thick neck section under the lip remaining from the original cylinder which helps to keep the form while beating out the thin balloon below. Not to mention the strong compacted wall and its ultra thin even section.

In the past pots at Ban Non Wat were also pressmoulded, coiled and by the iron age, thrown, so it was a surprise to find this technique persisting. I understand that it made very good cooking pots.



Setting the pots for firing



Bonfire cooling



Lighting the fire



A small version of the cooking pot

Memories of Ray - Alex McErlain

Ray Finch died earlier this year. His funeral was, unsurprisingly, packed with people who had travelled far to come and pay their respects to a man who had given so much, so freely, during his life, to the benefit of others. Many potters studied at Winchcombe where Ray taught largely by example not just how to make pots and all aspects of running a pottery but also something more important, about values and attitudes.

I first went to Winchcombe Pottery in 1972 as I had asked about the possibility of working there. I had been instructed to bring some pots with me for Ray to see. My prized piece was a large tenmoku glazed breadcrock. After talking to me for a while he looked at the pots which were set out on the floor of the glaze room. He removed the lid and lifted the breadcrock with one hand, puffed on his pipe and said hmmm. That was it, he said nothing else about the pot, it was my first taste of his gentle way of imparting criticism.

Ray was very encouraging to me and numerous other young students, but he did demand that you learnt and improved until you were able to meet the standards required for the pottery. He taught mostly by example, perhaps demonstrating how to throw a six inch bowl a couple of times then returning to discuss the ones you had produced before suggesting you re-wedge the clay and start again.

His generosity with his time extended to teaching me and others, glaze calculation in the evenings after work and later engaging us in kiln building projects on for example a small salt kiln.

Ray was a major influence on many potters not just in terms of his philosophy but also in the aesthetic values with which his work is imbued. Ray believed in the importance of the collective work of the pottery, which he devoted his life to, but the pots he made personally always stood out for me in terms of quality and assurance. His pots have the strength of form and suppleness in execution that early English country pots have, as has been said, 'almost incidentally' beautiful. They had something more though; his pots are in their own way quite adventurous, exploring the relationship of decoration to form in inventive ways. His use of ladle poured slip on pressed dishes and large plates is bold, utilising the negative space to create pattern which some mistakenly believe to be a paper resist.

Ray's pots are very much twentieth century studio pots, made for use in the modern age. His work extended the vocabulary of the modern stoneware potter, his interpretations of slipware techniques in stoneware have been much imitated but rarely bettered. In later years, he enjoyed making saltglaze, a passion which I may have ignited when I built a rather rudimentary salt kiln behind the old pottery. He was very encouraging but careful to let me make my own mistakes and learn from them.



Making a bowl, 1998



Saltglazed jar, combed decoration, h49cm, 1985



Porcelain cup and saucer, h8cm, 1974



Large plate, poured and combed ochre slip under white matt glaze, d38cm, 1972

He did put some pieces in the kiln and was interested in the manipulation of surface through the use of slip. Later he constructed much better salt kilns and the work that emerged is full of the energy of a potter exploring newly discovered techniques.

On Sunday mornings I would eagerly await Ray's return from church to take the first few bricks out of the wicket of the hot kiln. I can remember him being just as keen as me to peep in and see the results even though he had been doing this for almost forty years. From most firings he kept back a few of the best pieces for future exhibitions. They were stored in Cardew's old hut, away from the prying eyes of gallery owners and eager customers. One day, whilst helping him to carry some fine pieces to the hut, I said I thought he should keep back more pots as there were many really outstanding pieces from the firing. He said rather sharply 'Don't be so precious Alex' which neatly sums up his whole attitude to the relative values we place on pots which are at the end of the day made for use. I am proud to have been one of his students.

photos courtesy of Steven Yates

Ceramic Eggs for Easter Hunt

NPA member Sue Dunne has successfully designed and made 110 individual ceramic eggs for The World of Beatrix Potter attraction in Bowness on Windermere. This is the fifth year that Sue has been commissioned to make eggs, and thousands of people take part in the egg hunt with eggs hidden right across Cumbria.

This year's designs were based on Peter Rabbit, who is celebrating his 110th birthday, and The Tale of Mr Tod, which is in its centenary year. Each egg carries a phrase from the book and the illustrations feature primula flowers and leaves, badger's footprints, pine needles and pheasant feathers.

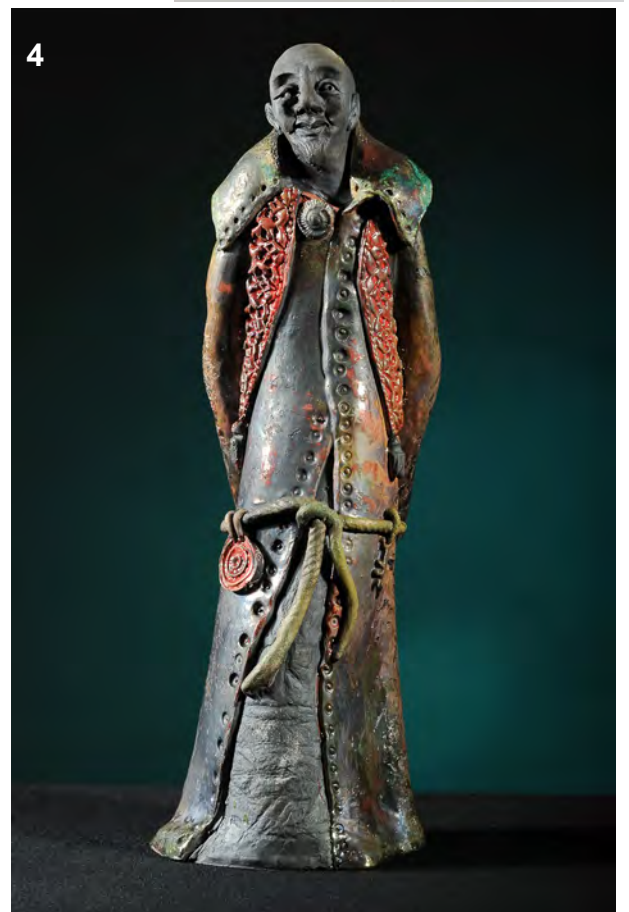
"The eggs are a real labour of love," said Sue, "and since 2008 I have made more than 500 unique eggs based on a number of different Beatrix Potter characters. Last year I also made some to go on show in Japan. Each egg goes through several stages - from making and firing to hand-painting then glaze-firing to 1100°C in order to keep the colours as close as possible to those of the living plants.

It is wonderful creating something based on these amazing tales and it fits in well with my work because I draw most of my inspiration from the natural world."



Members' Gallery

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





- 1 David Wright - **Swirly, whirly bottles**, coiled, wood fired
- 2 Ruth Charlton - **Emili**, white stoneware with underglaze and oxides
- 3 Anne Haworth - **Vessels**
- 4 Wyn Abbot - **Male Pleiadian**
- 5 Shirley Hetherington - **Henna Hands** see article page 18
- 6 Anne Pilkington - **Teapot**
- 7 Julie Miles - **Daisy pots**, porcelain
- 8 Ann Decker - **Lichen on Stone**, hand built form

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

Collecting and Collectors.... edited thoughts from an essay for an exhibition catalogue (for 'Contemporary Ceramics: A Personal Collection' at Craven Museum and Gallery)

Collections (and collectors) come in all shapes and sizes. For some collectors the pursuit becomes something of an obsession. Someone once said that objects become a collection when you have to find a way of displaying them. As the items in this exhibition show, artwork can be shown to fine effect in a domestic setting.

Over the years we have amassed a fairly large number of contemporary ceramics, sometimes swapped with other makers. On one memorable occasion Jim had been the MC at the International Ceramics Festival at Aberystwyth when the late great Paul Soldner's work was on show. He decided to blow all the money from his sales there to buy a Soldner piece. (Soldner was known for his free forms and eccentric decoration – he wore a different shoe on each foot to stamp the tread into sheets of clay.) Later our young son was heard to say to a friend 'My dad paid £500 for a pot that someone trod on!'

I suppose I have something of the collecting bug in me in that I have fourteen jugs on display in my kitchen as well as a shelf with eighteen teapots and shelves of Devon 'motto ware'. But I always stop when the price starts to go up and now I tell people I am downsizing and may consider selling or even giving away pieces, but for me the pleasure of *using* handmade pots every day never leaves me.

The truly committed collector is a different animal and we are very lucky to have in Yorkshire four of the most significant collections in one place at York Art Gallery. The Anthony Shaw collection amassed over forty years in his Chelsea home has recently arrived to join the Milner-White, Henry Rothschild and WA Ismay collections. Shaw's collection reflects his own personal taste towards sculptural works, whereas WA Ismay (Bill) was more interested in collecting functional pots.

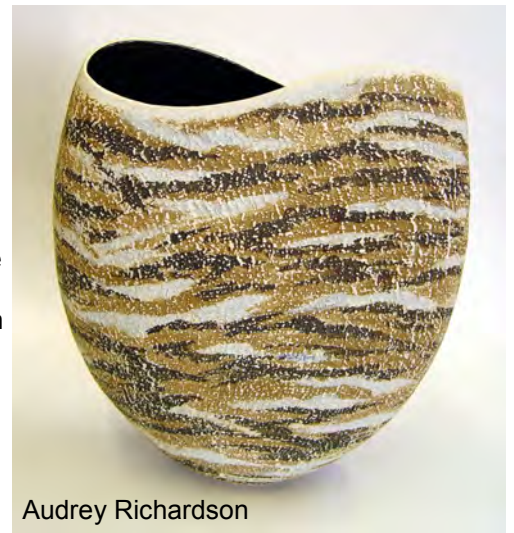
We visited Bill in his small terraced house several times and it was floor to ceiling with pots, one on every stair, a cellarful below and space on the kitchen table only for his food to be eaten. Even pots on the draining board, which covered the bath.

So it is evident that 'collection' is a catch-all term which covers many degrees of intensity.

The collection on show here is sub-titled *A Personal Collection* and that is where the crux lies: the pot has spoken to the buyer and has been selected for some qualities that s/he sees in it and feels it would enhance her/his life. This leads to the question of the role of collectors from a potter's point of view. It goes without saying that it is flattering and the money is most welcome, but is also good for the soul to know that someone values what you do, feels it is special and wants to appreciate the process as well as the product. I think one of the most important roles a collector plays is that s/he cannot resist *talking* about the items to other people and maybe infecting them with their enthusiasm.

A downside has been that on a couple of occasions we have been approached to see if we would like to buy back pots bought long ago, usually because people are moving to smaller places.

When you live and work with someone for a long time you tend to make assumptions about their philosophy and approach to work, so I actually sat down with Jim Robison recently to ask him specific questions. These are some of the thoughts that emerged. Ceramics is for him a vocation and an avocation (work carried out for entertainment), and has been an all-consuming passion for years – a teacher who makes and a maker who teaches. The emphasis has changed since the closure of Bretton Hall College and as well as making he now includes courses, demonstrations and book writing as strands of his work.



Audrey Richardson

One of the upsides is that you are your own boss (guided by customers) in charge of the making, glazing and firing cycles. In between there are visits to other potters, galleries and shows to recharge the batteries. There is a pleasant social element about the world of ceramics. Another is that the selling element of the gallery contributes to the income and promotion of other potters, and the wider ceramic community allows you to travel.

There are few downsides, although one of them would be frustration when things do not go well; if the quality of a piece is not right, or lime particles cause the clay to 'pop'. There can be some detriment to social life by being obsessive but usually a fair balance is struck.

Mostly Jim is happy working in isolation but he does enjoy it also when people are helping him, for example with a commission, and he certainly enjoys the social interaction with customers. Commissions help to move the work on because new solutions have to be found – as when a client wanted a water feature which had to be made frost proof.

Other potters are important because you speak the same language. Intricacies of production are uninteresting to outsiders but they are shared by the potting family. They will help you sort out design and making problems and that is how you learn.

Jim believes collectors are important because they underline the progress you are making with your work and they become friends in a specialist sort of way. WA Ismay, mentioned above, became a kind of mascot to the potting community. It was a two way process because Jim broached to him the topic of what would happen to his collection when he died, and went to the solicitors with him to begin the process of bequeathing his collection. Bill saw the collection as an educational tool and members of the Northern Potters' Association helped him to document it.

What does the future hold? Those of a certain age are stuck. There are new developments on the horizon but many explore digital fabrication processes. The computer generates an image which is passed into materials through a layering process. Digital computer operated machinery is capable of doing things only limited by the imagination. This is to do with Art but not much to do with clay. A potter is tied to his material, an artist is tied to his ideas.

Craftsmanship is something Jim treasures and so he would like to think that it still has value as he sees lots of expressive potential in the material (clay) precisely because it is so versatile.

I conducted this interview in our local pub and as the waitress brought our food I put aside my notepad saying 'I've been interviewing my husband.' 'Oh' she said, 'How's he doing so far?'



Paul Soldner

Special Events

Once again, members have been encouraged to put on special events during May as part of National Craft & Design Month. Here are those which I know about!

For a full list, visit craftanddesignmonth.net



- 1 - 31 May Open Studio - The Pottery, Greenlands Farm Village, Tewitfield, Lancs, LA6 1JH - NPA member **Wyn Abbot**
- 1 - 5 May Open Studio - Studio 7, Billingtons (adjacent to Gusta Gusto café), Roots Lane, Catforth, Preston, PR4 0JA - NPA member **Brenda Fee**
- 5 - 6 May Open Studio at Higherford Mill, Gisburn Road, Barrowford, BB9 6JH, NPA members **Julie Miles** and **Daniel Bridge**
- 5 May Beginners pottery workshop - Pendle Pottery, Trapp Lane, Simonstone, Burnley, BB12 7QW - NPA member **Lizi Botham**
- 5 - 6 May Open Studio - 74 Kingsway, Penwortham, Preston, PR1 0ED - NPA member **Anne Pilkington**
- 5 - 7 and 12 -13 May Open Studio (part of Open Up Sheffield and South Yorkshire) - Whiston Brook Studio, 31 Moorehouse Lane, Whiston, Rotherham, S60 4NH - NPA member **Barbara Wood** and painter Liz Churton - openupsheffield.co.uk
- 4 - 13 May Greystoke Arts Festival - 20 potters and 6 textile artists showing and demonstrating in St Andrew's Church, Greystoke, Cumbria - includes NPA members **Chris Cox, Bob Park, Roma Short, Roger Bell, Rebecca Callis, Jan Burgess, Clare Farley, Gwen Bainbridge, Nigel Edmondson, Arwyn Jones, Mary Chappelhow** - greystokeartsfestival.co.uk
- 6 May Raku pottery workshop - Pendle Pottery, Trapp Lane, Simonstone, Burnley, BB12 7QW - NPA member **Lizi Botham**
- 12 May Open Studio - 2 Common End, Addington, Chorley, PR7 4DT - NPA member **Anne Haworth**
- 12 - 13 May Pocklington Area Open Studios - includes NPA members **Penny De Corte, Jill Ford, Gerry Grant** and **Tony Wells**
- 17 May - 2 June Northern Clay - Corner Gallery at the Biscuit Gallery, Newcastle - includes NPA members **Alan Ball, Harding & Palmer, Andrew Pentland, Steph Jamieson, George Ormerod, Rob Watson** - northernclay.net
- 19 - 20 May Lady Bay Arts Festival - Open Studios, Nottinghamshire, includes NPA member **Alan Birchall** - osnotts.co.uk/lady-bay-arts
- 20 May Ceramics in Charnwood - 30 potters in Loughborough Market Place

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Open Night - Monday 21 May, 7pm
Exhibition of

Sculptural Ceramics by Ann Decker
and cubist-inspired paintings by Tim Pearce

Norman Rae Gallery, Langwith College,
University of York

Ann's abstract works are organic and colourful forms
of rhythm and motion; curvy, twisting and kinetic like
coastal shells and eroded stones.

www.anndecker.co.uk
exhibition continues until 2 June

Forty Years of Playing with Mud - Carolyn Corfield

A Shirley Hetherington Retrospective



Up for grabs

Ultimately, Zen navigation directed our steps to Shirley Hetherington's recent retrospective exhibition in Great Ayton. Despite being armed with an address we sought directions to no avail. However, following our nose, we espied steamed up windows in the distance which on close inspection revealed a jolly crowd. We had found our destination!

Advertised for the event as 101 but actually numbered 99 on a door in an alleyway, Shirley's enterprising husband had rectified this minor detail with an appropriate sticker. Postie beware!

In earlier times a Poor House stood on the site, subsequently replaced by a school attended by Captain Cook as a child, now an exhibition venue and museum.

Ushered into a pristine white space conveying an aura of gravitas to exhibits spanning the forty years of Shirley's ceramic endeavours, we were presented with thought provoking eclectic pieces related to themes which encompassed global warming, consumerism, recycling and woman's body image. Diverse hand built work included colourful raku fired wall plaques evoking landscape imagery, an exquisite porcelain 'dreaming female' with butterfly transfer decoration and a humorous early piece, 'Meet me outside the Tube', created for her husband Gordon, made everyone smile. In contrast a 'despairing female', her face encased by hennaed hands, formed a stark reminder that the practice of arranged marriages is still a burning issue.

Having been acquainted with Shirley's work for some 20 years, I never cease to be surprised at her take and representation of life's moments. She continually responds to the Zeitgeist not only in her ceramic work but also within her published writings and poetry.

Shirley initially trained with David Greaves and Eddie Hawking during the 1970's. Currently she is very active organising independent exhibitions in tandem with her NPA participation and the Roseberry Ceramic Group events led by Claude Frere-Smith.

As a last word, the NENPA exhibition, 'Out of the Earth III', within the gardens of medieval Crook Hall, Durham City, 15th April – 21st May 2012, features her latest piece inspired by a song Shirley remembers from the 1970's entitled 'Someone left the cake out in the rain' (*MacArthur Park*). Do visit, it will make you chuckle!



Meet me outside the Tube

Welcome To New Members

Christele Askew	Hemswell, Gainsborough	Lincolnshire
Caroline & Mark Booth	Heald Green, Cheadle	Cheshire
Amy Buttress	Carbridge	Inverness-shire
Fiona Byrne-Sutton	Glasgow	
Paula Canney	Blencarn	Cumbria
Susan Crame	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Tyne & Wear
Ann Johnson	Moor Monkton	York
Debbie & Jonathan Michaels	Hathersage	Derbyshire
Mary Morgan	Formby	Liverpool
Micaela Schoop	Preston	Lancashire
Susan Sharpe	Leigh	Lancashire
Lisa Svensk	Preston	Lancashire

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

A BAKER'S DOZEN

Booth House Gallery

Jim and Liz Robison will be hosting invited members of the North Wales Potters Association for their annual Summer Exhibition of 2012.

Opening Sunday, 1st July, 12-4pm

Including ceramics by:

Jacqui Atkin
Joan Callaghan
Paul Lloyd

Beverley Bell-Hughes
Linda Caswell
Jeff Lomas

Terry Bell-Hughes
Fiona Clai-Brown
Catrin Mostyn-Jones
Pea Restall

Vicky Buxton
Wendy Lawrence
Charmain Poole
Simon Smith



This show is in conjunction with the Holmfirth Art Week (1-7 July) which is in aid of the Macmillan Charity and will continue until 2nd September.

Gallery hours: Sat and Sun 12-4pm, Weekdays: phone to check. 01484 685270

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NPA

To have your details added to the **website**, send your name, contact details (email, phone, web) to John Cook at websitenpa@gmail.com together with up to 4 images of recent work, and an artist's statement of up to 100 words.

For events to be added to the website and listed in the newsletter diary, send details to npanews@btinternet.com. If you have a poster or flier for the event, include it.

www.northern-potters.co.uk

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If you have any queries on this, please contact Alan Birchall, Treasurer - email: doc.albirchall@ntlworld.com

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York, YO42 4NH
npanews@btinternet.com

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Joint membership

(2 members at one address)	£34 (has to be paid by standing order)
Full time student/unwaged	£10 (has to be paid by cheque or PO)

(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.

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
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Regional News

Contact your regional coordinator with ideas for events, exhibition visits, ceramic related items for sale / wanted etc. Most of our members can be contacted by email, so you can get your message out to a wide audience.

North East

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



We had a successful, but wet, set-up of OUT OF THE EARTH III at Crook Hall Gardens. Our Private View went well and we were pleased to see some new faces there and to have some new exhibitors. The exhibition continues until 21st May. Crook Hall is open every day except Fridays and Saturdays....phone: 0191 3848028 for more details.

Possible new exhibitions at Hexham Moot Hall Autumn 2012 and Durham Cathedral possibly Autumn 2013 are being explored. We are hoping to have our Regional Event later this year....details to follow.

East

Co-ordinator: Lesley Anne Greene
Email: lesleyannegreene@gmail.com
Tel: 01943 431823



As national ceramics week is fast approaching I would like to start with a reminder that NPA East members in the Pocklington area are participating in an open studios event and that Fangfoss Pottery are conducting a community mural-based workshop .

At the end of March I met one of our new members at the sale of David White's pots at the studio in Mytholmroyd which she and several other local potters are taking over and continuing its use as a workshop.

Just before Easter I went to view members work on show at the Blue Tree Gallery and noticed quite a few red spots. I also visited the fabulous Gordon Baldwin Exhibition at York City Art Gallery and have just forwarded info from Helen Walsh regarding a ceramics symposium there on the 11th May. This would be a great opportunity to meet up with other potters / members and I am disappointed that I am unable to attend. I would love to hear feedback from anyone who does go.

Some NPA East members have been busy showing their work at the BCTF in Harrogate. I visited the show on Tuesday 17th April and it was encouraging to hear that the majority of people I spoke to felt that orders were up on last year.

I expect that everybody is busy preparing their work for summer shows and exhibitions but please do not forget that I am happy to forward your news to other members in the NPA East region and should anyone wish to arrange a get together/ networking session in their locality I am happy to pass your ideas/ invitations on.

South East

Co-ordinator: Brian Holland
Email: brianhollandceramics@yahoo.com
Tel: 01909 724781



No report received

South West

Co-ordinator: Clive Weake
Email: clive.weake@gmail.com
Tel: 01625 536388



We are meeting on Saturday 28th April at Barbara Chadwick's between 11.00am and 3.00pm.
Address is 3 Mayfield Road Timperley Cheshire WA15 7TB.
We are still looking for a suitable venue for this year's exhibition.

West

Co-ordinator: Dave Harper / Geoff Wilcock
E-mail: ghwilcock@uclan.ac.uk
Tel: 01772 862852



20 members attended the March meeting. It was encouraging to see both new members and regular members interacting and exchanging views. Issues that were raised by members: N.P.A. funding, forthcoming exhibitions, new venues, events and guest lectures.

Craft & Design Month, May 2012 - Julie Miles has set up a Blog in order to follow the progress of NPA West members who are taking part <http://ceramicmap.blogspot.co.uk/>. It is also posted on our Facebook site NPA West.

Garden Party, Arteria- Liz Collinson reported that 14 members were taking part and that sales were going well with some exhibitors needing to restock. The exhibition runs until the 14th of July.

Open Craft Exhibition, Platform Gallery - Work submitted by NPA -W members has been selected for the forthcoming exhibition, which runs from the 5th May until 14th July.

UCLan Graduates Exhibition - Student members will be displaying work in both the BA Hons and MA Ceramic Show at UCLAN, Victoria Building, Preston. The exhibition runs from the 15th June until 22nd June.

Next meeting - UCLAN, Victoria Building, Ceramic Workshops, Preston, on Tuesday 19th June at 6.45 pm. A brief meeting will be held, followed by a tour of the degree shows. The theme for a ceramic vessel or form is ' Pendle Witches '

North West

Co-ordinator: Ruth Charlton, Old Barn Studios, Ruthwaite, Ireby, Wigton, Cumbria, CA7 1HG
Email: ruthcharlton5@hotmail.com
Tel: 016973 71690



[A very warm welcome to Ruth Charlton, NPA-NW's new coordinator! Here is her first report:](#)

After a very interesting talk and demonstration by Adam Field at the Solway Ceramics Centre at the weekend, it was suggested that members from our region stay behind and have a chat about the situation regarding the co-ordinator's post. There were only a handful of us there by the end of the day and it seems that I was the only one with the necessary expertise on the computer and not up to my eyes in organising other things that, of course, I found myself volunteering for the job. I'm sure it won't be as daunting a task as it appears to me now, two days after the event, and that being able to send a few emails and work with a spreadsheet are not the only requirements needed and I will do my best to co-ordinate things and keep in touch with members. Finally, I would just like to thank Roger, on behalf of the members of the group, for all the hard work he has put in over the last eight years.

[And farewell and many thanks for all his hard work over the years to retiring coordinator Roger Bell! Here is his final report:](#)

Some of you may not know about the 2nd Greystoke Arts Festival coming up soon – see events listing for details. I hope to see some of you at the PV.

'Potters Don't Retire' - Michèle Beverley

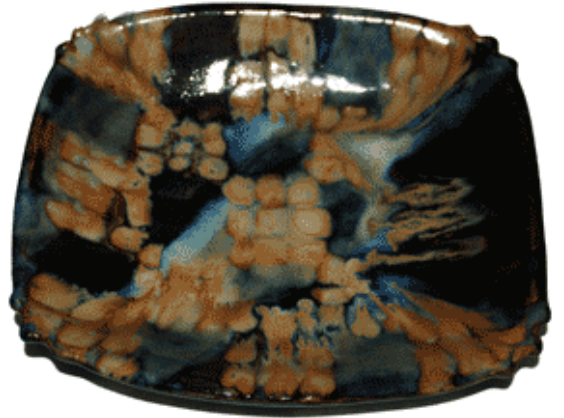
"But potters don't retire!" rings in my ears from potters and non-potters alike. "Look at Lucie Rie, working in her 90's!"

Well, this potter *is* retiring and, unlike others who have written recently in this Newsletter, I won't be back - I'm looking forward to a whole lot of things which I've had to neglect in recent years as I've had to work harder to make fewer pots.

But I loved potting for many years and if my creativity and enthusiasm waned in the last two or three years, maybe it was in part my own fault because I didn't get out enough to meet with other potters and replenish myself. I missed those weekends NPA used to run which were always a wonderful source of new ideas and of learning new skills, but which had to be discontinued due to lack of a suitable venue.

I might not have been in this position either if I had not neglected to take notice of the stresses and strains my work was putting on my body until they got in the way of my work. I would urge every potter, both young and older, to take notice of their body and do something to counteract the poor postures we often adopt – yoga and pilates stretch out those muscles and help prevent problems. *So do it*, don't just think about it, or think those extra couple of hours making are more important than the maker. They are not!

It has been good to see how the Newsletter has developed over the years and become so much more professional-looking than when I was putting it together, with Margaret Teasdale as editor. That was before most potters had computers and I suppose I got the job because I had one – but I couldn't type efficiently and, as nothing came through by email, everything had to be typed so it took several days to do. And there was no way we could reproduce photos as nicely as they are done now, but no doubt it's just as difficult to get people to contribute!



Parting with my equipment and raw materials (see advert) doesn't mean I'm parting with my love of pots, though – I'll still be out there admiring them and buying even more that I've no space for!

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ash was added at cone 9/10,
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