

# NPA News



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

February to March 2021  
£2, free to members



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Front Cover: Siobhan Miles-Moore, Large Haematite and Copper Microcosm, 32cm W x 48cm H. Image Clive Doyle

Back Cover: Richard Rhodes, Ginger Jar 35cm H, thrown stoneware, fired under oxidation to cone 6.

## Next issue

The copy date for the next issue of NPA News is 22 March 2021

Articles should be between 200 and 1000 words saved as text files or written in an email.

Images need to be high quality for printing, saved as .jpg files. 1MB is a suitable sized file.

Please send text and images as separate email attachments – do not embed images in documents.

Send them to [npanews@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:npanews@northern-potters.co.uk)  
Email or phone the editor if you have any queries or need help.

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## From the Chair

We move into a new year with renewed optimism of returning to some sort of normality in a few months. The Waterstreet Gallery in Todmorden is now open to applications for the NPA Earthworks exhibition and I hope for a good response from members. The gallery is actively developing its online presence and all the work in the exhibition will be included in their online gallery. Email [info@waterstreetgallery.co.uk](mailto:info@waterstreetgallery.co.uk) for details.



The Connecting Craft exhibition at the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe is also now accepting applications. This is a joint NPA and print exhibition. See page 4 for further details. There might be some delays but the exhibitions are currently scheduled to go ahead. Look on the Waterstreet and Platform Gallery websites for their Open Exhibitions later in the year as these are also good opportunities.

It was good to see the Throw Down on TV again. I am still trying to get my head round the RedBox Gallery shown in the last NPA News. I will have to make a visit to see an exhibition in a phone box.

Your committee has revisited the bursary scheme and its development. It was proposed to have four bursaries at £250 but we are finding this a little too prescriptive. Some members only need a small bursary to develop ideas or learn new skills and techniques so we are adjusting the awards. £250 will be the maximum award with smaller amounts where appropriate. We feel that this will encourage more members to apply. The total available is £1000.

Thanks to Jack Hardie for working 'under the bonnet' of the NPA website to make the administration easier. We are about to trial its operation.

We welcome Michelle Park as our new treasurer. The handover has been efficient and seamless and thanks again to Emmeline for her work over the past two years. We also welcome Bev Seth onto the committee. Bev was joint coordinator for the SE region so has a lot to offer. It was also good to hear that the regions got together with a Zoom meeting.

John Cook

## Your Committee

Chair	John Cook <a href="mailto:chair@northern-potters.co.uk">chair@northern-potters.co.uk</a> 01282 695886 Burnley, Lancs
Vice Chair	Pamela Thorby <a href="mailto:vice-chair@northern-potters.co.uk">vice-chair@northern-potters.co.uk</a> York
Secretary	Sally Streuli <a href="mailto:secretary@northern-potters.co.uk">secretary@northern-potters.co.uk</a> 01619 287184 Altrincham, Cheshire
Treasurer	Michelle Park <a href="mailto:treasurer@northern-potters.co.uk">treasurer@northern-potters.co.uk</a> Low Bentham, Lancs
Membership	Ann Davis <a href="mailto:anninhercastle@gmail.com">anninhercastle@gmail.com</a> 07855 242226 Macclesfield, Cheshire
Newsletter	Joan Hardie <a href="mailto:npanews@northern-potters.co.uk">npanews@northern-potters.co.uk</a> 01900 821001 Cockermouth, Cumbria
Publicity	Dianne Cross <a href="mailto:publicity@northern-potters.co.uk">publicity@northern-potters.co.uk</a> Keighley, West Yorks
Website Coordinator	John Cook <a href="mailto:website@northern-potters.co.uk">website@northern-potters.co.uk</a> Burnley, Lancs
Website events/courses	Dianne Cross <a href="mailto:publicity@northern-potters.co.uk">publicity@northern-potters.co.uk</a>
Nadine Blakemore	Ilkley
Gerry Grant	York
Lynn Grant	York
Carol Newmarch	Middlesborough
Bev Seth	Sheffield
Kathryn Stevens	Barrow in Furness

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## Diary

In the current circumstances, you should check with the organisers before travelling to events. To add your events to the diary and website, email Dianne Cross [publicity@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:publicity@northern-potters.co.uk)

to 28 Feb	<b><i>Love Mud</i></b> Cornerstone Arts Centre, Darlington NPA NE
1 to 28 Mar	<b><i>Form and Function</i></b> Jarrow Hall, Jarrow NPA NE
to April	<b><i>Affinity</i></b> Arteria Gallery, Lancaster NPA West
11 Mar to 25 Apr	<b><i>Earthworks</i></b> Water Street Gallery, Todmorden NPA exhibition (see right for how to apply)
24 & 25 Apr	<b><i>Sheffield Ceramics Festival</i></b> Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield (see page 5)
11 to 13 June	<b><i>Potfest Scotland</i></b> Scone Palace, Perth Many NPA members
10 Jul to 18 Sep	<b><i>Connecting Crafts</i></b> Platform Gallery, Clitheroe NPA exhibition (see right for how to apply)
16 to 18 July	<b><i>Celebrating Ceramics</i></b> Waterperry Gardens, Oxford Several NPA members
23 to 25 July	<b><i>Potfest in the Park</i></b> Hutton-in-the-Forest, Penrith Many NPA members
30 Jul to 1 Aug	<b><i>Potfest in the Pens</i></b> Skirsgill Auction Mart, Penrith Largest gathering of NPA members
6 & 7 Nov	<b><i>Only Clay</i></b> Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield Many NPA members

### Exhibition Opportunity

Earth Works – a Northern Potters Association and Water Street Gallery exhibition, celebrating the inspirational qualities of clay work.

Exhibition dates: 11 March to 25 April 2021

An opportunity for members to showcase their creativity – Sculpture, Decorative, Functional and sometimes weird and strange!

Submissions for this exhibition are now open and close on 18 February.

Contact: [info@waterstreetgallery.co.uk](mailto:info@waterstreetgallery.co.uk) for an application form and further information.

Water Street Gallery is in Todmorden, West Yorkshire. [www.waterstreetgallery.co.uk](http://www.waterstreetgallery.co.uk)

### Exhibition Opportunity

Connecting Crafts – a mixed exhibition of NPA ceramics and prints by 10Strong Artists

Exhibition dates: 10 July to 18 September 2021

The aim of this exhibition to highlight and showcase the wealth of talented artists in these organisations and connect visitors with local contemporary makers and their crafts.

All submissions will be reviewed by a selection panel. There is no entry fee.

Application forms are available now from The Platform Gallery.

Contact: Andrea Westall & Jack Shackleton at [platform.gallery@ribblevalley.gov.uk](mailto:platform.gallery@ribblevalley.gov.uk) tel. 01200 425566

The Platform Gallery is in Clitheroe, Lancashire [www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/platformgallery](http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/platformgallery)



Robert Campbell



David Helm



Hillary Harrison

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## New Artists to the Website

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Thora Talling



Sue Clark



Jeni Jaques-Williams

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## Carrying on in East Region – Lyn Clarke

In January Kay and I usually come up with a theme for a meet-up in Leeds. This year we decided to do this via email and share it for our newsletter report, so here we go. The question we posed was “What impact has 2020 had on how you work and how you sell? Have you kept your motivation?”

**Jane Hurford** from Hive in Shipley was one of the first to reply. “Both my Hive courses continued on Zoom with people making at home and dropping pots off for bisque firing. I focused on plates as the theme, as they are easier to transport. We looked at ways to decorate flat surfaces. My demonstration pieces are numerous and varied, although many of them are destined for the drainage in the bottom of plant pots... We had a socially distanced glaze session using only transparent glazes in the hope that I could get things completed for Christmas presents, but as one of the attendees subsequently tested positive, I had to self-isolate and the pieces are still at Hive, awaiting collection when we can open up again.

Courses are proposed again, on Zoom, starting in February. Pottery at home is a bit cumbersome for many but the social aspect is important. Other courses are available and many of these satisfy the creative itch that we all need to scratch!”

**Anna Brown** had a new studio built after a large tree demolished her previous one last year.

“The new studio is an old Wolds Farm Waggon Store. The floor has been painted with ‘sand’ paint, which turned out yellow. There is an electric and manual wheel (£120 from a school finishing with ceramics). The two kilns are second hand.

“Natural light is in short supply, so I’ve put in ceiling mounted spotlights. A slab roller has been adapted for rolling clay. The clay bins are on wheel stands, so they are easy to move. The boiler for the apartment is in the same place, so provides some warmth.

“Tibpots is named after our house and village – Tibthorpe Grange in Tibthorpe.”



Anna Brown in her new studio

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**Allison Withen** shared her journey into social media and how she adapted selling her work. “In 2020 I suddenly lost my usual routes to market. I make ceramic jewellery, particularly cufflinks, for museum shops, now all closed, and vessels which I sell through local shows, craft fairs and the North Yorkshire Open Studios, which were all cancelled.

“So I paid a company, Be More Social, to teach me how to do social media. I found it hard work and sometimes dispiriting, and I had to make a real effort to try and embrace social media. I spent about £600 over 5 months, gaining skills to enable me to post with confidence. All in all, I think it was worth it. I have been quite successful in raising awareness of who I am and what I do, and it has also resulted in some sales. I post on Facebook and Instagram, and I can't say I love doing it, but stick at it. Posting in local FB groups has got me better known to local people.

“I also had some signage made to stand in the road by my studio, which is set back from the road with a courtyard in front, to encourage people to come and check out my display area. I am based in Gargrave on a road which gets a lot of walkers and is next to the Leeds Liverpool canal. A fair number of people saw the sign, came in and bought. Many were local and said that they didn't know I was there. The signage paid for itself many times over and was definitely a good investment. Now when I post in local Facebook groups it is easier for people to find me because of the sign. So the signage and social media have worked in tandem.

“Now we are locked down so the first few months of the year will be lean but come the Spring I am hoping things will perk up. I'm using this time to develop new work and have fun with clay, something I don't allow myself to do enough.”

**Mary Brandon** said “Pottery has been my lifeline in 2020. With the extra time I've tried to improve my throwing and glazing. I've found that functional items sell well, especially mugs. I also sold a lot of Christmas tree decorations online, through Facebook and a couple of online Christmas markets. I don't enjoy posting on social media, but I've actually sold more than I would have on stalls. I'll never be a professional potter but it's encouraging to sell pieces and it pays for the next lot of clay! I also love raku, making larger decorative pieces but my house is overflowing with

pots! I'm looking forward to when we can have meetings and workshops and swap pottery ideas.”

**Emmeline Butler** emailed, “I haven't thrown anything for about a year. Very nervous about starting again, but really not feeling the urge to start yet. Made some Christmas decorations and a few little bits, but none of my normal work.

I have been selling online though, so I set up an Etsy shop at the beginning of last year and have been selling through that. I've also done some online exhibitions including videos etc, so I guess I've tried to embrace technology a bit more to promote my work. I've been running a sale through January as well, which has been ok, but think it would be better if I had a greater following (worth bearing in mind again for future years though).”



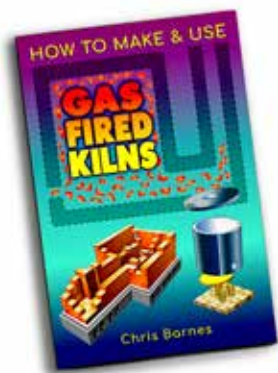
Lynn Clarke, Garden Pot

**Lyn Clarke** “I used the time to learn to throw bigger pots. I watched Steve Booton's lockdown video diaries (thanks Steve) and learned to throw large pots in sections and also small moon jars. He is doing a second series for the current lockdown.

“I also experimented with glazes, then dug, processed, threw and fired my own clay. I was planting a bush and found a seam of clay – the bush had an enormous planting hole!”

Finally, lots of people said they were really pleased to see the Throwdown back on the television and were looking forward to watching it.

# Firing Matters – Chris Barnes



I have written a practical how-to book, which might be of interest to members, about firing clay with gas. It is also about why the way we fire matters. Most of it is taken up with descriptions of gas fired kiln building, however what got me started was the difficulty I have when I try to explain why the way we

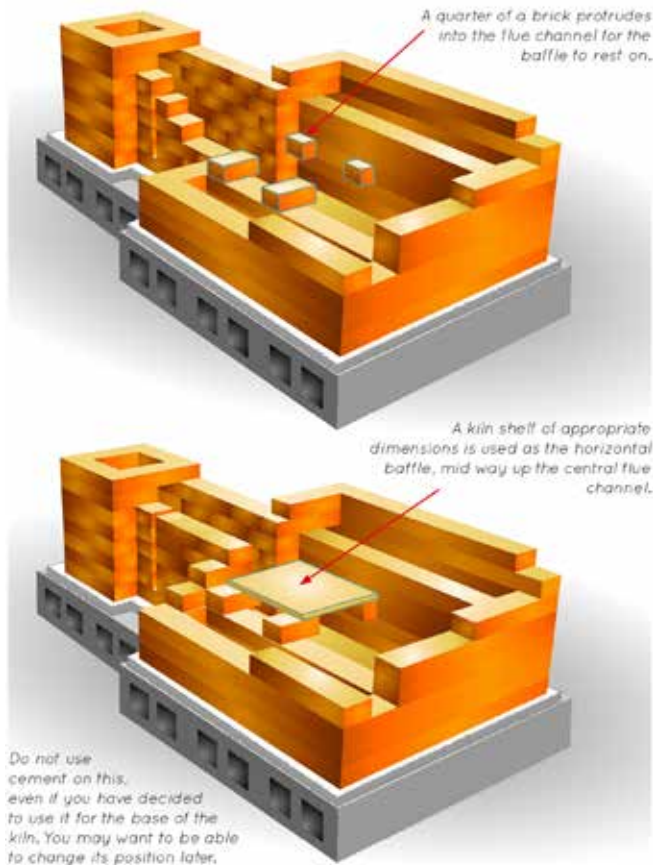
fire our pottery is so crucial. So I started writing it down towards the end of the first lock-down as a way of gathering my thoughts.

The real motivation for writing came from my experience of teaching pottery at various places over the years, and never having access to anything but electric kilns. We learn what we do, and no end of explanation can replace experience. Getting to grips with the firing process is always the last piece of the jigsaw for my students. Having raku firings once a term with flames and naked heat, made a positive contribution to this. It is exciting seeing the firing exposed at its hottest and I noticed how the experience helped my students get a deeper understanding of all glazing and firing.

Live flame firing opens the door to many things that an electric kiln prohibits. Here is a list of them:

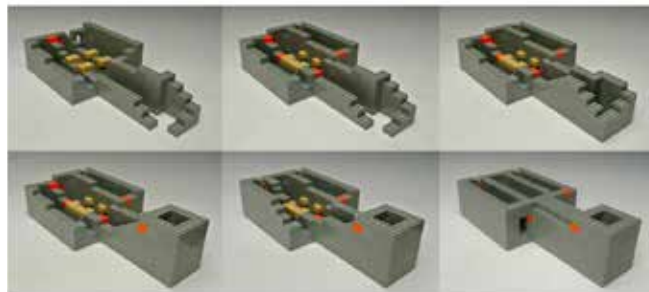
- Reduction firing in general
- Soda and salt firing
- Trapped carbon effects
- Firing in saggars packed with combustibles
- True celadon glazes
- Copper reds
- Re-oxidising to get toasting effects
- Fly ash and flame flashing

All of these are possible with gas firing, except fly ash from wood, but a gas kiln can be made with fire boxes and fire bars in the path of the gas flame so that wood can be added to the firing.



Illustrations from the brick built kiln chapter

The most important thing about firing with flames is, I think, that you cannot flick a switch and walk away from the kiln. You have to be engaged and watchful, taking decisions based on your own assessments of kiln atmosphere, cones and flames. It is this engagement with the process which is so rewarding and it leads to a deeper understanding of the potters' craft. Yes, it is more difficult, but if you settle for what is convenient you get much less in all sorts of ways.



Planning your dream kiln with Lego® Bricks

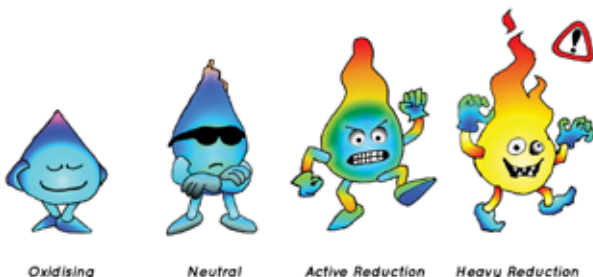
The other purpose of the book is to show that anyone can do these things. You can build your own kiln given the right information and guidance. It is really not so difficult to make a good kiln which will fire the way you want it to, and it will be a lot cheaper than buying one ready made.

We generally accept that as makers we need to be self-reliant in as many ways as we can, making tools and of course experimenting with our own glazes, but it may feel like a stretch to embark on making your own kiln. After all it is the most critical tool that we have for making pottery. Maybe that is the best reason for taking it on. A kiln is just a very hot oven, with the right materials anyone can make one that will fire with wood, oil or gas. Gas is the most adaptable, takes up much less space than wood or oil for the same heat value, and it burns so cleanly that it can be used in urban areas as well as out in the countryside.



Kiln building at The Knott, circa 2009

Using live flames puts us back in touch with, and hopefully more in control of the thing we call firing. With real firing, your work is much more likely to feel alive and vigorous because you put the clay and glazes through a more dynamic process. It will not make a bad pot good but the chances are it will have more character.

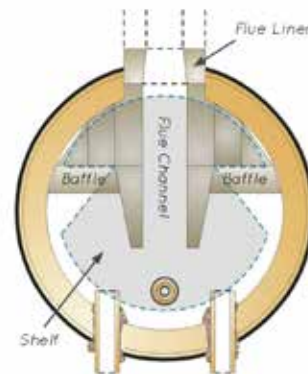


Flame and Atmosphere Identification

When I started out I looked forward to having my own kiln one day. I did not think at the time that it was essential to fire with flames, or that I could build a kiln myself, but I discovered both are true. The book has given me the opportunity to put down in words some of my experience, without boring everyone with it. You can put a book down whenever you want!

It starts with explanations of why live flame firing is “real firing” and why gas is the most adaptable fuel choice. Then it shows how to build three safe, functioning gas fired kilns in the most economical way. Each building project has a step-by-step guide and is illustrated with photographs, diagrams and plans. More information is given on the burners that can be used, how they work and how to control the kiln atmosphere to get the results you desire. Reduction firing is clearly described and explained. There are also photographs of some things which were fired in the kilns to show they actually work and to illustrate glaze effects. There are sections on monitoring firing and atmospheres, kiln logs are discussed and firing schedules are given for each of the kiln designs.

Floor Plan Of The Converted Kiln



The gaps between the HTI flue liner bricks and the kiln wall will be sealed later with ceramic fibre blanket.



Shaped flue liner bricks - are made to fit the exit hole in the kiln wall.



The flue liner bricks in position from inside the kiln

Illustrations from the chapter on converting an electric kiln for gas firing

So the next time your electric kiln needs new elements, stop and ask yourself this question – *Is now the time to convert it, and yourself, to fire with gas?*

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## The Vessel Project – Liz Kent & Sarah Vanic

Sarah and I met in Autumn 1989, in a bright white studio at St Albans School of Art. Somewhere in that class we began a conversation, and we haven't stopped talking since.

The Vessel Project arose out of our longstanding friendship and desire to collaborate artistically. We see the project as a conversation, a dialogue about process and how one makes meaning, not just through words, but through making. Clay, line, colour, drawing the external and internal space of vessels. Vessel as symbol and quotidian object.

During the March lock-down, we started to FaceTime twice a week. Often one or other of us would have made artwork, or we would be talking whilst making. At the beginning of lock-down, I started to draw domestic objects that were small and to hand such as mugs, bowls, and teapots. Sarah was engaged in making tableware, a chiminea and a rhubarb forcer.

We started to discuss our processes and share our works in progress. Sarah sent me a square, thick, handmade sketchbook and I started drawing.



View into a kiln

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A while back I had bought Sarah 'The White Road' by Edmund de Waal and she mentioned she was reading it. I had a copy, so I started reading it too.

We decided to work together for a year, to see where our collaboration took us. Repetition of shape, repetition of pots drawn and made. A focused interrogation of vessel accompanied by a tale of white as a third way of thinking about vessels.

Our dialogue begins to be about inspiration and starting points: her making of pots linked to my drawings and colours; my drawings linked to her pots; my writing about the project, not just sketchbook notes but an essay; my drawings are contained in books. It's all about the imagination, observation and relationship.

Over the summer, we hear we have secured seed funding from the NPA, exciting news, a validation of our ideas. We keep making and thinking.

In October we spend a FaceTime call looking at Sarah's newly formed porcelain pots. She shows me her experiments, re-forming the pots, changing their shapes, using water to slump and wave them, using sharp tools to scrape away. I watch as the top edges of a pot sink in on themselves, meeting to form a whole, an ellipse. The pot becomes rather like a Cornish pastie, then squashes up and out to become a bulb. Eventually it becomes a ball and disintegrates. It cannot be remade back to its pristine vessel former self. Sarah speaks about clay memory. We ponder over this idea together – clay memory as both a physical reality and a metaphor for psychic reality.

She sends a photograph of the pots in her kiln. I am preoccupied by the spaces between them and their clear whiteness. As the image on my screen is back lit, they are dazzling.



Since March I find I can't find a way to paint white. The more I look, the more colour I see in the white glaze, pale yellow reflections, blueish-lilac shadows, greys. I stop trying to paint white. I'll come back to it. Yet there is something seducing me about the white and what is contained within it. It isn't blank. The white is just the beginning. Kate Bush comes into my head with her song 'Fifty Words for Snow', and Stephen Fry intoning complicated words 'whiteout' is the one that sticks.

Trying not to worry about painting white, I think about space, curves and boundaries instead. The internal space of a vessel made to carry something. To contain. If there is nothing in the pot, does it mean it's empty? Schrödinger's cat miaows softly in my ear. Not quite the same idea, but almost.

I paint an imaginary blue pot, an ancient shape with a rounded belly, a small opening, and handles on each side. It's a deep blue black and inside, resting on the bottom, golden seeds. Alchemical.

The process of transformation. Each time a pot becomes, each time a drawing starts, each time we engage, with curiosity and a free-floating attention, change happens. In Sheffield and in South East London, we witness from far off that artistic, alchemical process.

I long to hold one of those porcelain vessels, but for now I have to imagine the weight on my palm, my fingers cradling the shape, feeling the texture and presence of the porcelain whiteness.

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## A Story of Stories – Martin & Siobhan Miles-Moore



Martin and Siobhan, Collaborative Moon Vase, copper and granite glaze  
Image Euan Adamson

In 2016 Martin had decided to retire as a physiotherapist and return to his former career as a potter. After his experiences in the early 90s he wanted to build a practice that felt authentic, connected and gave him direct relationships with his customers.

Being based in South Lakes meant there was plenty of opportunity for events, art trails, fairs and galleries. The problem was letting customers know who and where we are and what we are offering.

Siobhan had yearned to be a designer maker but had ended up studying business and working in partnership development in Higher Education. We committed to a formal approach to marketing and relationship management. It was important to give people opportunities to engage with our new business and so we planned a series of open studio and selling events, working with existing arts organisations and independently.



Development work for Martin's porcelain Date Night Dining ware

Image Victoria Sedgwick



At Hipping Hall, Oli Martin, Siobhan and Martin  
Image Euan Adamson

These events were marketed directly to local businesses and organisations whose customers fitted the profile of our target customers – people who could afford to spend a few hundred pounds at a time, are interested in the local area and might appreciate handmade work. We articulated what makes our business unique, using found and foraged local materials telling stories of place.

Through ongoing conversations, exploring possibilities and taking round leaflets, we had a timely introduction to Chef Oli Martin from Hipping Hall, who had just decided to find a potter to work with. We worked with Oli to help him ensure that his dining ware told the same stories as his food.

Collaboration is key to the Miles-Moore Ceramics brand. Collaborating on projects and events with poets, filmmakers, jewelers, photographers, chefs, musicians, painters, digital artists, glass blowers, quarrymen, rug and furniture makers, has helped not only spread the word and drive sales



Stainless steel glaze for Fraiche  
Image Euan Adamson

but has kept us creatively inspired and pushing boundaries.

Adopting a partnership approach with key businesses has allowed us to build a reputation and network. It also led to us secure amazing studio space as Artists in Residence for the Brathay Trust.

We also work with the delightful MasterChef Champion 2019 Irini Tzortzoglou and collaborated on work for her first book. This ongoing relationship has recently showcased our work in a Greek Easter-themed photoshoot in the Stables at 94, which is being entered in the Shed of the Year Competition.



Irini Tzortzoglou serves soup into Martin's neriagi bowl  
Image Victoria Sedgwick

Chef Oli Martin from Hipping Hall is also a very warm and loyal human being who has showcased our work in two sets of MasterChef The Professionals Finals. As he launches his Master Chef Finalists home dining menu with Dean Banks of Haar, he has reminded everyone where he buys his ceramics. This is perfect timing for our release of our Date Night and Fine Dining at Home ranges in early 2021, when we will also open our virtual studio and shop.

We have both used skills from other parts of our lives to build a business that has been able to respond well to the current challenging situation. We invest a lot of time in getting to know new customers because this creates connection, which in turn generates loyalty and new opportunities, even if we are never sure what they might be.

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## Members' Gallery

All NPA members are invited to send images of their work to the editor for inclusion in the gallery.



Carolyn Corfield. Concubine Lotus Flower (cased and un-cased)



Anna Brown, Wolds Dew Pond Bowls



Loretta Mayfield, A knot of Toads, 12cm x 8cm to 5cm x 3cm, hand-built pinch pots textured with man-made and natural materials, nets, and leaves finished with oxide washes over bisque, stoneware, some with buttermilk glaze



Roger Bell, 'Love on a Stick', mixed media with terracotta clay, fired to 1190°C, height 1m plus



Richard Rhodes, thrown stoneware, fired under oxidation to cone 6

When sending images for the Gallery, please provide a print quality jpg file of about 1MB or more, sent as an email attachment.

It is helpful to readers if you give short details about the piece including its title, size, material and key firing information. Email to [npanews@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:npanews@northern-potters.co.uk)

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## Profile – Michelle Park, NPA Treasurer

I joined the NPA a couple of years ago as my interest in ceramics grew. I took up pottery around three years ago. I was looking for a way to make myself stop working. I run my own businesses which have grown over the years and, as I am home based, I have found it more and more difficult to 'turn off' from work. I am a potter as a result of the Great Pottery Throwdown I just loved how wonderful things could be created from a lump of clay. I have always been artistic and learning to throw on the wheel has not only enabled me to have an outlet from the business and provided some mental calm but also provides such a never-ending challenge in terms of improving, learning to throw new forms, learning new techniques and mastering how to glaze and decorate. I feel real excitement at the start of a throwing session...yes, some of what I produce will not be great, but more often than not now, the poorer attempts are getting fewer!

I have progressed over the years in 'fits and starts' as and when I have had the time. A recent move to North Yorkshire has now given me the dedicated pottery space and a bit more time to really take my pottery forward. I don't have any aims to produce anything to show and sell at this stage, I just enjoy throwing whatever takes my fancy and hopefully producing a well-made pot at the end. Even though I can see that my practice has improved over the years, I don't feel quite ready yet to have my wares out in public, hence the image accompanying image is of my favourite pot – a wonderful, bellied jug by Doug Fitch.

In terms of learning how to throw, I am predominantly self-taught although I have invested in a couple of short courses and private tuition to master the basics. I am an avid reader of ceramics books and magazines (including NPA news) along with learning whatever I can from established potters on their YouTube channels. So my practice stems from a range of places rather than from a formal training course which are now so few and far between.

I really enjoy attending ceramics fairs and from these have added to my small collection of favourite pottery. I really like Fitch and McAndrew, owning a couple of pieces. Their ceramics are so tactile and the glazing colourful and fluid.

I have recently taken over the role of Treasurer for the NPA and have been getting to know the other committee members over the past couple of meetings. Now that I have a better handle on my business, I have a bit of spare time to volunteer to help support the NPA. I would urge others to do the same. The art of making pottery can have such a positive impact on makers and owners alike. Having a strong and sustainable NPA plays a key role in helping create the conditions for potters old and new to prosper in challenging times.



Jug by Doug Fitch owned by Michelle

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# The Geometry of Life – Helen Birnbaum

*This is an extract from Dec/Jan 2015 NPA News with an update from Helen.*



The geometric patterns of creation are constantly being discovered throughout modern science. Researchers have found that all organisms have very similar genetic codes, and they can be expressed by 64 different elements. So, I made a chess board with 64 squares to be an appropriate environment for ceramic micro-organisms chess pieces.

The chess pieces sit on a chess board where the squares drip down organically exaggerating the clean lines and repeating patterns used in the pieces. The chess pieces represent perfect 3-dimensional forms such as the tetrahedron and hexahedron and the repeating patterns of nature seen when you view viruses and flowers under the microscope. Geometric Chess demonstrates the microscopic geometry of all life forms in a game. There are identical pieces on either side of the chess board, but the opposing sides are in black and white to emphasise their difference.



My work is hand built ceramic sometimes decorated with mixed media metal items for sculptural emphasis. During my recent residency at Liverpool Hope University (2014 to 2015) I started producing black and white sculptural forms inspired by the geometric forms of viruses as they appear under a microscope, almost like flowers but not quite. My style of working, which is both imaginative and methodical, enables the production of these striking objects made from a succession of identical hand-built ceramic elements. I hand build my ceramic pieces, adding coils, slabs and spheres of clay together. I also make a range of my own glazes, some are glossy, others matte, to set off the geometry of my ceramics.

## *Six years later*

I have exhibited at numerous venues including at the Gordon Pathology Museum in London, the World Museum in Liverpool, and ARB Gallery in Cambridge during the Cambridge Science Festival in 2020. After the pandemic restrictions are lifted, I will be exhibiting my coronavirus inspired sculpture at the Victoria Gallery & Museum in Liverpool as part of the Nature V. Humans exhibition.

To see more, visit <https://significantbunchofviruses.wordpress.com>

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## Books – Roger Bell Review

### Gas Fired Kilns, Chris Barnes

Published by Mud House at £15.99, available on Amazon as a paperback or e-book.

It is nice to review a book written by an NPA member and available directly from his website. It comes into a field previously covered by Daniel Rhodes, Ian Gregory, Joe Finch and other famous names. The best of these are not currently in print but Frederick Olsen's 'The Kiln Book' is currently in its 4th edition. This covers most firing methods including gas, but I find it rather daunting with numerous design variations and tables. Chris Barnes comprehensively covers why you might wish to fire with gas, kiln design, materials required and firing. It includes some glaze recipes, useful appendices, a booklist and a complete and a well-checked index.

'Live flame firing' was until relatively recently the only way to fire clay, but, as Chris notes, most people now start with an electric kiln. He quotes Steve Mills from Backyard Kilns, 'building a good kiln is not rocket science but something anyone can do'. The book takes you through the stages to make this a reality. It starts with an overview of kilns, design principles and the materials required. Within a few pages, terminology becomes clear and the necessity of sensible compromise obvious. For example, the most efficient, evenly-firing kiln is round but is very difficult to build. The sensible compromise is square with an arched roof!

Barnes starts the build sections with a raku kiln. After text and diagrams of the parts, come materials and tools and finally the making stages, illustrated with diagrams and photos. This format is followed for the other kiln types described. A separate chapter describes the actual firing process.

Next the conversion of an electrical top-loader to gas firing is outlined in the same way but obviously with more stages and complications. Important points are the emphasis on safety for some actions, damping kiln bricks where refractory cement is used to avoid excess water being absorbed. Firing schedules complete the chapter.

### New Books

The Art of Kintsugi: the Art of Beautiful Repair A Killy	£26.99
Ceramic Art & Civilisation Paul Greenhalgh	£30.00
Adrian Dalpuyrat Tornier & Marino	£200.00
An Illustrated Brief History of Chinese Porcelain Yang Guimei	£15.99
Making Polymer Beads Carol Blackburn	£12.28
Masters of Attic Black Figure Painting Elizabeth Moignard	£28.99
Practical Pottery: 40 Projects Jon Schmidt	£23.95
The Way We Were. The Potteries in the 1950's & 1960's Abberly & Hardy	£14.99

Then comes the construction of a brick-built downdraft kiln, basically the Joe Finch design. There are clear diagrams of the design stages and helpful comments such as not using kiln cement so that bricks can be moved and reused if corrections are needed or you wish to modify the design. I would like Chris to have added the frequent use of a level, as it is very easy to find a wall starting to slope and have to rebuild several levels of bricks.

The final chapters cover monitoring the firing, applying gas, recording firings, glaze recipes and the like. 'Applying the Gas' might seem a bit late but I think Chris has it right. You need to consider it before deciding on the details of your kiln design but not the basics. There is also a page of 'Top Firing Tips' such as checking that you can see the cones and spy holes are big enough to remove draw trials.

This book does not attempt to give all possible kiln designs but gives sufficient information to design and build a practical kiln. The few alternative books are much more difficult to negotiate. Overall it is clear and well written and the enthusiasm of the author is infectious. I would certainly recommend it.

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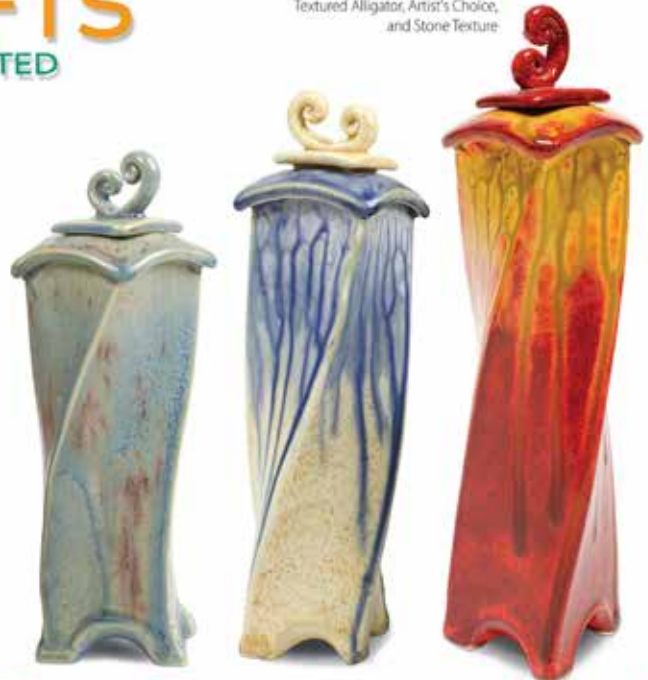
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# Welcome to new members

A warm welcome is extended to all our new members.

We look forward to seeing you at events and images of your work in our gallery.



Adam Conway	Cowdrill, Sheffield
Rachel Brennan	Dalton-in-Furness
Gary Benn	Leeds
Joanne Hemmingfield	Sheffield
Jane Gidlow	Fillingham, Lincs
Katie Harrison	Winsford
Simon Taylor	Morpeth
Margaret Nah	Hull
Helle Kjolstad	Richmond
Clare Langston	Kidlington, Oxfordshire
Kirsten Rivelin	Sheffield
John Stanley	Harrogate
Julie Parkin	Morpeth
Joy Gibbs-Price	Retford, Notts
Rae Tribbick	Lancaster
Ruth Dunning	Bacup, Lancs
Timothy Copsey	Holme, West Yorks
Janette Carter	Norton St. Philip, Somerset
Sarah Heaton & Helen Cammiss	Ashbourne
Cheryl Tully	Mawdesley, Lancs

Ann Davis

Membership Secretary

Visit [northern-potters.co.uk](http://northern-potters.co.uk) for membership forms and subscription rates.

## Small ads

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Small ads (up to 30 words) are free to members and reach 600 potters in the north of England.

[email npanews@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:npanews@northern-potters.co.uk)

## NPA Artists' Gallery

All NPA members can have a page on the NPA website to display and promote your work.

You will need to provide up to four photos of your work, an artist's statement of about 100 words, email address, phone number, plus any website, Facebook and Instagram links.

Contact John Cook with the details and updates.  
[website@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:website@northern-potters.co.uk)

## Advertising in NPA News

### Per issue prices

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colour	1/2 pp £30	1/4 pp £18	1/8 pp £10
B&W	1/2 pp £20	1/4 pp £15	1/8 pp £8
Size	176Wx106H	86Wx106H	86Wx53H

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## Committee News

### Only Clay Ceramics Fair

The Only Clay Ceramics Fair is being organised by NPA member Steve Booton and will take place in Sheffield on 6–7 November this year.

I proposed to the committee that NPA should support this new event and we agreed to fund a stand for up to three members to exhibit their work and also offer a sum to cover some expenses. We see this as a good opportunity for members who have not exhibited at ceramics fairs before and perhaps only sold work at a village show or on a shared student stand. Steve welcomed the initiative and suggested a two-stage selection process.

This opportunity was widely shared on the main and regional Facebook pages and by email via the Regional Coordinators. We received ten applications. The committee will do an initial selection of six, then pass these on to the Only Clay Selection Panel to make the final choice of three.

Some of our most notable members, not least Steve Booton, made their first foray into large ceramics fairs on a shared NPA stand.

NPA have offered shared stands to members previously at Earth & Fire and see these as a way of supporting members to dip their toes into the world of selling to the public at a selected ceramics event.

Dianne Cross



Kelham Island Museum - the new venue for both Only Clay and the Sheffield Ceramics Festival.

### NPA Bursary Scheme

The NPA is offering bursaries to members needing support to develop their work by attending courses, workshops or otherwise exploring new directions. The maximum award is £250, from a fund of £1000 for 2020/21.

All you need to do is get an application form from [treasurer@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:treasurer@northern-potters.co.uk) and complete it, outlining how and when the money will be used to benefit your practice. The committee will consider your application and let you know if you have been successful. Applicants must have been NPA members for at least one year.

The final step is to write a short, illustrated article about your experience for NPA News.

### Equality & Diversity

The NPA is an inclusive, not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers which welcomes and values diversity (of age, ethnicity, race, religion, disability, belief or non-belief, sex or sexual orientation) within its membership. Our aim is to ensure that all our members are treated with dignity and respect.



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# Regional News

Regional groups were members communicate with others local to them and arrange events in their area.

Happy new year to all, let's hope 2021 is a good year.

Our last zoom event of 2020 was a fun activity, check out our Instagram feed for pictures, Debbie explains, "On 15th December Kathryn Stevens was joined by Hillary Harrison and me, Deborah Robinson for a 'What can you make in 30 minutes' Zoom challenge. This was a fun challenge and an uplifting way to round off a very difficult year. I think that Kathryn has done a fantastic job as the new North West regional NPA coordinator and would like to thank her for bringing local members together throughout 2020".



NW

In January Sue Clark gave us another demonstration of her work on the wheel, this time making her storage jars and sharing her knowledge of glazes which a few of us plan to try out ourselves.

I am receiving a number of undelivered emails from members, so if you want to be included on the mailing list and are not receiving emails from me please let me know so you can be added to the list.

[Kathryn Stevens](#)

[northernpottersnw@gmail.com](mailto:northernpottersnw@gmail.com)

 [NPAnorthwest](#)

 [NPA NW](#)

I hope everyone is keeping well during these strange times. Thankfully, The Great Pottery Throwdown is back, filmed at the beautiful Gladstone Pottery Museum, reminding us of working in shared studios. Also, Grayson's Art Club will be back in February and is open for submissions at [www.graysonsartclub.com](http://www.graysonsartclub.com). The six themes are Family, Nature, Food, Dreams, Work and Travel, and the first deadline 10 February.



W

The Platform Gallery Craft Open 2021 exhibition runs 10 April to 27 June. The deadline for submissions is 26 February – checkout their Facebook page for details. Also at The Platform Gallery, the deadline for the Connecting Crafts exhibition is 5 March.

I'll do my best to keep everyone informed of our other planned exhibitions at Garstang Arts Centre and Lytham Heritage Centre.

Sadly, Ceramic ArtLab at UCLan is still closed, almost a year since we were last in the studio making together. Our WhatsApp group is still going strong and keeping our spirits up. It's a great way to keep in touch and support each other. Please get in touch if you would like to have a meeting via zoom and I'll do my best to arrange this. Happy making!

[Kim Graham](#)

[west@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:west@northern-potters.co.uk)

 [NPAwest](#)



Our December zoom meeting was a real-pick-me-up with Sue Clark generously sharing what she has discovered about throwing hollow forms in a question and answer session. Chat about studio set-ups and general pottery talk followed. Yet again, another lovely virtual gathering.

Our next zoom meeting will be held on Thursday 11 February at 7pm. We will be holding our annual meeting where we can discuss our plans and aims for the year ahead. It would be great if as many of our regional members as possible could attend. I will email the relevant login and passwords nearer the time. Meanwhile please feel free to email me with any suggestions that you would like to see in the minutes.



SW

Applications for our SW NPA exhibition held on 28–31 May 2020 at The Didsbury Parsonage, Didsbury, South Manchester, will be opening soon. Please make a note of the date. It is a first come first served application with set up being on the 27 May. This year we are being offered all three galleries to hold a socially distanced exhibition.

[Juliet Myers](#)

[email@sw-npa.co.uk](mailto:email@sw-npa.co.uk)

 [NPAsouthwest](#)



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Any member can ask to be included in any regional mailing list.  
You must have given your consent to receive NPA emails.

## Regional News

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“All the best laid plans...”



NE

Our 'Love Mud' exhibition in Darlington Cornerstone Arts Centre, scheduled for February, has been postponed. We had almost 30 potters lined up to exhibit, but the good news is that the gallery want to reschedule as soon as it's viable, so we will be in touch as soon as a plan can be made. Similarly, the 'Form & Function' exhibition at Jarrow Hall in March is highly unlikely to go ahead at the allotted time. Applicants will be kept informed on that.

NE Committee member Wendy Turner has done some fabulous work on organising a three day 'festival of all things clay' for the end of October. We have had quite a lot of interest already – please check out our Facebook page (Northern Potters Association North East) for information and a questionnaire to complete.

Hopefully there will be good news about all these opportunities to get your work seen soon – in the meantime stay safe and well.

Robert Campbell, Carol Newmarch, Diane Nicholson, Helen Pickard, Wendy Turner & Jaime Westwood  
[north-east@northern-potters.co.uk](mailto:north-east@northern-potters.co.uk)  [NorthernPottersAssociationNorthEast](#) 

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E

We have missed our annual meeting in Leeds and usually we would be making plans for the year ahead, but lockdown has put pay to that. We have noticed that there are fewer emails than normal and fewer posts to our Facebook page so with that in mind, we contacted the group and asked for challenges there had been for selling and how people had kept their motivation. Pottery has been difficult for some and a lifeline for others. The responses were collated and make for interesting reading (see p6 & 7).

We have welcomed new members to NPA East and as always are very happy to get emails with fresh ideas for meetings in the future.

Hive has a lot of online courses in February, check out their website. They are welcoming students from around the world!

Lyn Clarke & Kay Butterworth [enpa.coordinator@gmail.com](mailto:enpa.coordinator@gmail.com)  [NPAEast](#) 

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The Christmas meet up and not so Secret Santa took place at Forge Dam cafe in Sheffield with about 12 people. It was so good to do some catching up. The 'secret' Santa was a challenge, but no-one went home with their own pot.



SE

The photography workshops with Ian Daisley are still planned for the end of February. Wendy and I are looking forward to it as we think our photography skills need improvement.

We will shortly send out details of a second Pop-Up pottery market in Stocksbridge, pencilled in for Sunday 22 August. Last year it went well considering the short notice and they are keen to have us back. We also have Art in the Gardens in Sheffield in September to look forward to. We will send out an email when we get the details through.

The Sheffield Ceramics Festival, now in its 8th year, is planned for 24 & 25 April 2021 in its new venue. An exciting new event 'Only Clay' is being organised by Steve Booton for November.

We have some other ideas in the pipeline, but they will have to wait until we are allowed to meet up indoors. One day soon we hope.

Graham Northing & Wendy Wall [senpacoordinator@outlook.com](mailto:senpacoordinator@outlook.com)  [NPAsoutheast](#) 

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## Pots for the NHS – Robert Campbell

I started pottery seriously a couple of years ago. In the 80s I attended classes at a local night school but hadn't taken it past the first few sessions.

With a bit more time on my hands and looking for a creative outlet I looked for a studio or classes to see if I could learn and develop that dormant interest. I found Muddy Fingers in Jarrow, run by Marvin Kitshaw and Diane Nicholson. Under their expert and friendly coaching, I have learned to turn my ideas into real items of pottery and it's now become a bit of an obsession.

Japanese art and culture are my most significant influences. This stems from when my father visited Japan in the 1950s and the souvenirs he brought back, including a porcelain dinner service, a large, decorated platter and several watercolours. I always admired the simplicity of the designs and the style of execution.



The arrival of COVID-19 and a national lock-down in March last year made the need for a creative outlet even more important for me. I believe that creative activity, like physical exercise and sleep, is critical for mental health and wellbeing. I spent a lot of time experimenting and throwing new things. I also built my own Raku kiln based on the design in James Watkins and Paul Wandless' book *Alternative Kilns and Firing Techniques*.

I thought of this as a self-care project and didn't think it'd go much further than adding to the clutter on every flat surface in the house. As the months in lockdown passed, an artist friend made positive



comments about my pots, but it wasn't until my daughter suggested trying to sell some and donate the money to charity that I did anything about it.

It was clear that the pressures on frontline healthcare staff in the NHS were huge. A specialist charity and support organisation had been created by NHS staff called The Healthcare Worker's Foundation and so I decided to donate the proceeds of sales of my work to them.

We're now in the third lockdown and I'm still making pots. The vaccine rollout gives us hope that things will improve but right now the stresses on NHS staff are even worse. I plan to continue to donate to the charity – I've raised about £2000 so far.

"Healthcare Workers' Foundation (formerly HEROES) is a charity founded by NHS workers, for NHS workers. We exist to support the welfare and wellbeing of those fighting to keep us healthy and safe during the COVID-19 crisis, and beyond."

<https://healthcareworkersfoundation.org/donate>





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