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Editorial

Uncertainty for many means these pages are for the time being lacking in news of events other than virtual ones. The exception being Wareham's Creative Gallery and our 'big one' - Bishops Kitchen. The excellent news is that it will take place in '21 and planning has begun, see page 3, and your inboxes.

Many thanks for all the contributions. One way or another you help to fill the pages, but if I may paraphrase a musical and Dickensian character - more, please!

Neil Dewey

Group and Members News

REMEMBERING TOM PAINE

How do you talk about someone like Tom?

Someone who came on to the scene of the Southern Ceramic Group not very long ago, but very quickly became central to quite a lot of ventures.

It may have been his engineering background – he graduated in engineering at Pembroke College, Cambridge - that made him the 'go-to' person for several glaze questions in the SCG's Glaze Group, especially about the floating blue glazes he loved. Or it may have been his army background – he went to Sandhurst and had a long army career, ending as Defence Attaché to the British Embassy in Berlin – that soon got him managing the organisation and display arrangements for the SCG's annual exhibition at the Bishop's Palace in Chichester.

(cont)



Group and Members News

REMEMBERING TOM PAINE - cont.

However, when you speak to people about Tom what they remember is something much simpler. His smile, for instance. 'Always with a smile' precisely captures him. In all the months of his late discovered cancer and treatment, his smile never faded. He had this remarkable ability to be clinical in answering questions about the chemotherapy and the course of the disease – something which immediately put people at ease and did away with those awkward avoidance silences that sometimes surround serious illness. Conversations with Tom right to the end were never stilted or artificial.



Many of us remember the first time we met Tom. One of us while doing pottery evening classes in Winchester, another during the Chichester exhibition, others in the Glaze Group meetings. Also very vivid for some of us was the last time we met him. For one of us it was last August. He and Anne had invested in a magnificent camper van and, making absolutely the most of the time they had left, they were travelling around whenever they could. They stopped by for coffee – COVID prevented more serious food sharing – on an afternoon when it was absolutely teeming with rain. Sitting under cover in an open barn Tom spoke about his new Persian cookbook, the recipes he'd already tried and the amazing culinary vista the book had opened up for them. That feels like the way to live – present in the moment, living in the most contented way one can, meeting all the friends you want to, living today not tomorrow. As one friend put it, he really did approach the 'One Day More' attitude from Les Mis.

He was amazingly kind, was Tom. In the Glaze Group meetings Tom's passion for understanding and improving glaze techniques stood out. And this passion was always framed in sharing – whether his own recipes or his solutions to others' technical problems. He seemed to share this sharing-ness as well as his zest for life with his wife Anne. He is missed.

Friends of Tom

BISHOPS KITCHEN 2021

At the SCG Committee Meeting of 10 March we reviewed the situation regarding COVID-19 and possible lifting of restrictions during the Spring and Summer. We decided that subject to the improvements being maintained and no significant changes to the Government's proposed programme of reducing lockdown rules we will go ahead with BK2021 and have begun our planning of the event which will take place from 31 July to 15 August.

The Exhibition Team will be contacting members to invite registration from 2 April to 11 April.

SCG ZOOM CHATROOM

2020's restrictions brought home to Abby Ducharme the importance of the social aspect of SCG membership and how much she missed it: the keeping in touch at demonstrations, sharing/showing work and handling the work of others, and the sparking of creative juices through interaction. Her proposal to counter this loss was to initiate an informal online get together to chat and share ideas and to help troubleshoot pottery related problems. The Zoom chatroom she set up has had two meetings so far with the next one planned for 9 April.

Twenty members joined the first meeting on Feb 16. With many of them being newer members of SCG Abby says, " We focused on just introducing ourselves, where we are based, what kind of pottery we make and how we came to pottery in the first place. It was a nice surprise for some members who realised they lived fairly locally to one another. Also, a great example of how varied the makers within the SCG group are, in terms of methods of making and types of clay or firing we use."

The next meeting in March was themed 'Throwing' as a result of the group's majority decision in February. The group were lucky enough to have Alison Sandeman with her many years of expertise and teaching to lead the discussion, undertake a few live demos, and show some examples of her thrown work.

April's meeting will focus on 'Decoration', in all its many forms. There will be a short demo and the opportunity for people to bring along examples of work they have with interesting decoration techniques and problems to troubleshoot.

Abby says, "With twenty or so people attending it can be tricky to get round everyone but I try my best to keep an eye on anyone wanting to speak or raise a question. I'm certainly no Zoom expert, but I'm hoping I can figure out how to share images during the chat. Youtube here I come!"

Next meeting is 9 April. If anybody is interested in joining please email Abby at abbyducharme@hotmail.co.uk .

SCG ZOOM LECTURES

Hosted by Tim Thornton the programme for the next lectures is:-

23 March	Phoebe Cummings (rescheduled) on unfired ceramic sculpture
6 April	Claude Aussage on kiln building and firing
4 May	Patricia Shone on highly textured hand-formed vessels
1 June	Matthew Blakely on geology and glazes
6 July	Lee Cartledge on Richard Bateson and the Potteries of Burton-in-Lonsdale

Booking details will be announced via Tony Thompson's mailings.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Our next meetings will be online, courtesy of Zoom on Monday 10 May at 7.30.

If you have anything you would like to bring to our attention please contact:
Sandie Dixon, Hon. Sec., 2sandie@tiscali.co.uk , 07899 948019 or any other member of the committee.

What's On and Been On

LINDA CHEW @ THE CREATIVE



The Creative Gallery in Wareham, owned by SCG member Fiona Kelly, is delighted to host an exhibition of Linda Chew's fabulous porcelain ceramics when we are able to reopen on 12th April. The show will be shortened to two weeks because of COVID closure and run 12th-30th April, and all being as normal next winter, Linda will have a few items on show in their group exhibition during November and December 2021, when all of their guests through the year return.



The Creative Gallery, St John's Hill, Wareham, Dorset BH20 4NB

Open 10am-5pm Monday-Saturday

01929 551505

www.creativegallerywareham.co.uk

SUE THOMAS - FRONT DRIVE SALES BOOMING



Sue says, "Faced with many boxes packed with pots and no foreseeable market I decided to set up a stall in my front drive. There was a cry for help from our local foodbank so I decided to sell cheap and cheerful pots and donate the proceeds to the cause. I checked the weather forecast and advertised for a week by posters in the village, a board by the road and on 'Nextdoor' social media. Some villagers were still nervous about shopping so I put an honesty box on the table, provided wrapping and watched from afar. I sat and made pinch pots and even did a bit of weeding in the garden!"

"It worked so well that later in the year with too many succulents bursting out of my greenhouse I held another sale but with better pots and included pots of plants. This brought a different group of people who didn't think they wanted pottery, but were tempted while they visited! I continued the charity angle by having a table of pottery seconds and books which raised more money for the foodbank."

"My stack of pots is building up again so I am hoping, that by the time you read this, there will have been an easing of lockdown and once again I will be able to offer a no-contact craft sale to my village neighbours."

Social Media

Find us on

The Southern Ceramic Group has its own Facebook page and it is easy to find using the following link; <https://www.facebook.com/southern ceramicsgroup>

If you visit you will find announcements, details about events and photos. These are usually posted by one of the committee members but anybody who has joined the Facebook group can post. It offers a great opportunity to chat to other potters. You can show your work or ask for help with a particular problem. Potters are generous people and always willing to teach, advise and share the lessons they have learnt.

Not on Facebook?

It is easy to join and simple to use and you are in complete control of the information that you wish to share and the friends that you want to have. I have found two videos on You Tube that will guide you through the necessary steps.

How to Setup a Facebook Account

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zf5q0oS0FM>

TIM THORNTON

Tim runs the SCG social media accounts on Facebook and Instagram. Whilst these have been useful in helping to promote our exhibitions the aim is to keep them active all year round, (particularly as we are still unable to run events due to Covid restrictions), in order to spread information round to members of the group (this will be in addition to existing channels like Tony's emails and the newsletter).

Please email Tim with anything you'd like posted – it could be a nice pot you've made, some spare kit you want to sell off, an exhibition you attended or you have coming up, or anything else that may be relevant. Also, images! Preferably at least 1024 pixels square resolution (don't worry about them being too large), and if they can have nice wide borders it makes it easier for him to crop them to the different image sizes for Instagram and Facebook use. If you have video,

SCG ZOOM ACCOUNT

We have paid for our Zoom account, so we are not restricted to 40 minute calls and other limitations of a free account. If you are wanting to use Zoom for any SCG activities, please email Tim Thornton.

scg_social@southern ceramicgroup.org.uk

Facebook for Seniors, Grandparents & Boomers FREE Short Video Course & Preview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVy6q2JHfKU>

Daunted? Then let us know and we will find somebody to talk you through it.

Connect, share, and learn.

There are a lot of groups on Facebook that have something to do with ceramics. Some are focused on the UK and others are global. I have found everyone to be kind, helpful and supportive.

Finally

Please post on the Southern Ceramic Group Facebook page. Show your recent work. Share a disaster. Seek the solution to a problem.

Currently all our lives are restricted to one degree or another so please reach out, share and communicate.

Jane Ogden-Smith

scg_membership@southern ceramicgroup.org.uk

then even better. But without images it won't get posted on Instagram, and you'll need to persuade him that it is worth posting on the other accounts.

Our accounts are below – please follow them, so SCG posts appear in your feed.

Also, if you would like SCG members to see what you are posting on your social media account(s), please use the following link to let us know your account details:

<https://www.southern ceramicgroup.org.uk/members-page/social-media/>

Southern Ceramic Group Social Media

Instagram: [@southern ceramicsgroup](https://www.instagram.com/southern ceramicsgroup)

Facebook: [@southern ceramicsgroup](https://www.facebook.com/southern ceramicsgroup)

Tim Thornton

scg_social@southern ceramicgroup.org.uk

Glaze Group - 13 Jan 21

Meeting by Zoom.

Present; Jan Griffiths, Charles Stileman, Hannah Elliott, Sue Kelly, Claire Stevens, Linda Smith, Mick Dixon, Vasu Reddy, Tim Thornton, Nadia Hopkins, Ruth Padday, Lesley Dixon.

Apologies for Absence from Kevin Akhurst. In Kevin's absence Tim kindly chaired the meeting and welcomed the new members.

Some members were at the beginning of the glaze journey and others further down the line. It was an interesting and friendly opportunity to share problems and information. Everybody had different styles and intentions and were using different kinds of materials.

The first two people to present to the group were Charles and Jan. They showed us work by master potters using very different materials, and with very different intentions.

JAN GRIFFITHS

Jan had noticed pots by a potter she much admires, Shozo Michikawa, for sale in an online auction. She particularly wanted a beautiful piece shown in the sale catalogue which he had brought over from Japan. This sold for way over her budget so instead she bid for other smaller pieces by him. These smaller pieces were part of a collection of work from the residential craft centre at Higham Hall which was being dispersed. The collection had been made over the years from the work and demonstration pieces of visiting lecturers. Jan had a particular interest in the work of Shozo Michikawa as she had worked with him over the years at the centre and had helped to build and fire his first kiln there. He has since become a friend. The smaller pieces she bid for were more modestly priced and three are shown below.



The first a very rough bottle form sliced and cut clay, the second a cylindrical twisted wheel made form, and the third a tiny non functional teapot about the size of a hand. A coarse grogged clay is used, without any glaze or decoration other than that given by the flames and ash and conditions in the wood fired kiln. The twisted pot in the middle and the tiny teapot turned out to each be one part of a pair, and to Jan's surprise and delight she had bought five pots instead of her original one intended piece.

CHARLES STILEMAN

Charles showed us a Derek Emms fluted celadon teapot made in porcelain clay. In contrast to the tiny rugged nonfunctional teapot by Michikawa. It was designed with function in mind, poured beautifully, had been used over the years with joy. It had mugs to match. The fluted decoration was expertly and deftly executed and the celadon glaze emphasise the flutes and grooves that decorated the surface of the pot.

He also showed a very nice teapot he had made following a demonstration by David Leach. Again fluted but the flutes were cut more deeply with a hacksaw blade and glazed with a zircon glaze over a dark slip.

Glaze Group - 13 Jan 21 cont.

SUE KELLY

Sue questioned why the speckles present in the test piece of this mustard glaze had vanished in the glaze on the final piece. She wondered if a small addition of manganese was responsible for the speckles

Suggested reasons included the possible sieving out of coarser particles more likely to give causing the speckles. Heavier particles might have sunk to the bottom if the glaze was not well stirred. Temperature/length of firing might have encouraged the particles to melt more into the glaze. Using ilmenite in a glaze might encourage speckles or perhaps using a clay body with iron in it.



CLAIRE STEVENS



Claire has started using Potters Choice glazes and showed beautiful relief tiles with iridescent colours. She fires her tiles on coils of clay to allow contraction and prevent cracking. She is using an old Cromartie kiln which is slow to fire with a big variation in temperate to manage.

It was suggested that a variety of shapes in the packing might help to even out temperature. The length of time taken to reach temperature could be shortened but achieve the same result, as the kiln was being so slow to fire that firing to a lower temperature would still allow the Potters Choice glazes time to mature at less than the recommended temperature. Cones in the kiln would help to record what is going on. It was noted that old kilns can be tricky!

LINDA SMITH

Linda has been using the lock down opportunity to make a large mural about evolution, which is in part a comment on climate change. She is using 54" x 12"sq tiles made in craft crank. In some areas she has covered the clay in a white slip to give a light ground on which to paint in underglaze colours. She has used a clear glaze over the top. It will be about 6' high when complete. We are hoping to see some photographs next time.

MICK DIXON

Mick showed us a completed order for a dinner service he had made for some special customers, a wedding present to themselves to be decorated with 'bright colours and a theme of plants'. Part one was delivered in time for Christmas 2019 , after which they placed a further order for part 2 'insects', which was delivered in time for Christmas 2020....oh well.

Clay; Potclays Special white stoneware

Base glaze; on bisque ware a dipped white opaque stoneware glaze.

Decoration; painted on the unfired glaze using underglaze colours and body stains plus an addition of dry transparent glaze and water, and a very small amount of glycerine to help the flow of the pigment and prevent it drying out.

The pots were then fired to 1260C



Glaze Group - 13 Jan 21 cont.

VASU REDDY

Vasu had been on a three month residential immersion course in ceramics at Emerson College, Forest Row. The first two months had been largely skills based with lectures and practical studio time for trying out topics being taught, with the last three weeks to prepare for a final show. It was a worthwhile course, but quite stressful meeting the final show deadline.

One of the visiting lecturers, Deiniol Williams, she found particularly interesting, <https://www.deiniolwilliams.uk/about>

There was discussion about different results from same combination of glazes - nuka / tenmoku. It was noted that differences could be caused by a number of things; clay body, different glaze thicknesses, temperature, length of firing, thickness, vertical or horizontal firing.

LESLEY DIXON



Lesley showed pieces she had made in response to Cabby Luxton's SCG online kurinuki SCG demonstration. The pots were made to contain succulents and glazed with various applications of raw ash, shino glaze, black slip and a nuka glaze. She plans to modify her design and try a raku finish to enable the succulents to drain better and thrive in a better drained and more porous body.

NADIA HOPKINS



Nadia showed a set of oxidised celadon stacking bowls she had made. Some were decorated with bold freely applied cobalt splashes, transformed into plant forms with further brushwork.

She was curious about a pink flush that appeared on some areas of a pot, and after discussion it was thought that vaporised manganese in a green glaze on an adjacent piece was reacting with tin in the glaze to give the pink.

Glaze Group - 13 Jan 21 cont.

TIM THORNTON



Tim showed a series of pots with the same barium glaze, but markedly different results, largely due to temperature variations. The first two from the same kiln, but different positions and the third from a different kiln, and under fired.

These two pots from different kilns with an oil spot glaze show hugely varied results due to differences in firing.



RUTH PADDAY

Ruth asked about glaze running off a pot. She had used porcelain clay, a white glaze inside and a green stoneware glaze on the outside, fired to C1270

Various suggestions were made such as a thinner glaze application, lower firing temperature, perhaps a different glaze to fit the porcelain body.



Glaze Group - 13 Jan 21 cont.

HANNAH ELLIOTT

Hannah Elliott (usually a slipware potter) is new to the Glaze Group. She has been experimenting with Cone 6 glazes for the first time in lockdown, trying out a tantalising looking recipe from Glazy called:

Gasworks Earl Grey: <https://glazy.org/recipes/18056>

China clay 29.23

Ferro Frit 3124 22.56

Nepheline Syenite 20.37

Whiting 17.1

Flint 10.74

+ Rutile 5

+ Mason stain grey sage 1%

+ Mason stain Cobalt free black 6666 0.5%



This black Mason stain isn't available from Scarva in the UK so Mason stain 6650 cobalt free black was used as a substitute, alongside the grey. The tests were fired to Cone 6-7 in an electric kiln with a slow cooling cycle. The clay body used was an off-white white stoneware and also a toasted stoneware.

Hannah reported that - as is often the way - the results were not the lovely velvet grey in the Glazy photo but "varied shades of murky purple". (Specific gravity 1.34 to 1.45 pictured in the tests). However, it was a useful learning process to mix batches of tests and to measure specific gravity. Interestingly, the addition of rutile, without the stains, resulted in a nice matt white with pale pink hazing.



The glaze group advised that there are other ways to get the grey effect and advised trying an iron rich slip with a shino type glaze over the top. This advice was much appreciated. Hannah has since switched to higher fired stoneware in the search for that elusive, flecky, matt grey. The testing continues.

Old Pots - Kevin Akhurst

Those of you who came to the AGM a few years back where I gave a talk will know that I have an interest in old pottery – in learning about it and collecting it.

When I started making pottery it wasn't long before I came across 'A Potter's Book' by Bernard Leach, which was probably the key text for many 20th century studio potters. In the famous first chapter of that book, entitled 'Towards a Standard', Leach gives a personal view about what good pottery is. He refers to the beauty and the 'intuitive, organic qualities' of the Chinese pots of the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD), which he says set a standard which should inspire modern potters.

Naturally I wanted to see some Song dynasty pottery and, as I believe Pottery is essentially a tactile art, hold some in my hands. Museums, of course, don't usually allow you to touch their exhibits, but handling is normally allowed at the viewings that precede ceramics auctions, so that is where I went for my pottery education. At these auctions I saw pots from all eras and all parts of the world. Holding a pot in my hands that was 1000 years old, 2000 years old or even older was an affecting experience for me. It felt as if I was making contact in some way with the person who had made the pot and the people who had used it. I could hold it in the same way that they did, feel the same weight and texture and imagine what they felt.

Some old ceramics sell for very large sums at auction, but I was surprised to find that some very ancient and, to my eyes, beautiful pots sold at price levels which I

could afford, so I started bidding. I try to exercise restraint in how much I spend (my wife helps me here!) but over the years I have gradually accumulated a collection of old pottery that encompasses much of the history of pottery worldwide.

Each old pot has its own story: The society and culture in which it was made, the level of ceramics technology at the time, the people who made it and who it was made for, the techniques used to make it, the functional and aesthetic objectives of the potter, its life in use and how it survived to the present day. Of course much of this will remain unknown for any specific pot, but it is surprising how much can be pieced together by reading around the subject and looking closely at the pot.

At the start of lockdown last year I began writing occasional pieces about specific pots in my collection. I wrote these for an ad-hoc lockdown newsletter for another pottery group which I am chairman of. They were written very much with a readership of potters in mind and I don't shy away from technical details where that seems appropriate. They have become a short series of 'pot stories' and to give them a longer life I have put them on my website. I thought some Southern Ceramic Group members might like to read them. You can find them via the following link:

<https://www.kevinakhurst.com/old-pots.html>

I hope you enjoy them

Kevin Akhurst

Members Profile - Sandie Dixon



I fell in love with making pots in the studio at the University of Southampton in 1973 and went on to attend evening classes at a local school. When my family came along, I started working part time which meant that I was able to attend daytime courses at Eastleigh College, where I took a Pottery A Level with Janice Fry in 1992. I think that all these studios, which I was lucky enough to use back then, are now closed – it must be much harder to start out as a potter these days.

I then enjoyed a few years with Jan Griffiths at her pottery in Botley before setting up a workshop at home in Southampton. This process was facilitated by my resourceful husband who found an electric wheel in a neighbour's garden and rescued it from going to the dump. He restored it and it has been going strong ever since. I don't know if the bicycle saddle seat which came with it is original, but it is very comfortable, so we've never changed it. A kiln arrived shortly after the wheel as a surprise present!

(cont. on next page)

Members Profile - Sandie Dixon cont.

Most of my work these days is thrown domestic ware, such as jugs, dishes, bowls and lidded pots, made from earthenware clay. I decorate with ready-made, coloured slips from Potterycrafts, which seem to fit very well with the smooth terracotta clay I use. I paint, trail or sponge the slips on to leather hard clay, building up layers to give more painterly effects. Paper resist, using shapes cut from newspaper, is always a starting point for my naïve designs. Slipware lends itself to commemorative plates or plaques and I have made many celebratory pieces for birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and new homes. I have also enjoyed making one off pieces featuring events such as the London Olympics and the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower voyage, the latter incorporating various aspects of migration.



I joined Southern Ceramic Group in 1993 and was delighted to find that not only did it give me an opportunity to sell my work, but it also introduced me to a wonderfully creative and generous pottery community. I consider myself to be very much at the hobby potter end of the skill scale within our membership, and I am continually grateful to be part of such a talented and inclusive group.

Sandie Dixon

Something in the Air - Tim Thornton

We all hear about the perils of dust, and particular of silica dust, in the studio. But how much dust is safe? And how much is in your studio? And is it the wrong type of dust?

Your body is quite good at protecting your lungs from dust. Your nasal hairs filter out the biggest particles, and then as the air goes down your windpipe into the bronchi any dust that hits the sides is pushed back up into your mouth by cilia (or hairs), where you generally swallow it. This dust doesn't harm the lungs, and is cleared out between coming in from your studio in the evening, and going out in the morning, all nice and clean and ready to be recontaminated. These large particles are called inhale-able dust by the medics, or PM₁₀ by the environmental monitors (for our purposes we can ignore a slight difference in definitions). The 10 refers to the particle size – 10 microns.

The smaller particles, respirable dust or PM_{2.5}, gets into the alveoli or air sacs in the lungs, and can take many months to be cleared, if at all, so the concentration builds up with time, and this is what causes a lot of the damage. Your lungs become clogged up, and a few substances like crystalline silica have sharp edges that also cut away at the lungs. So you get scarring, your lungs lose elasticity, breathing gets harder, and some cause lung cancer. These are long term effects, though, slowly building up over the years with low to moderate levels of exposure.

So how much dust is going to cause you harm? Scientists study these things and set safe levels, which are then set into law or regulated, but often politicians and industry water down the levels in the interests of profit. So the numbers here are taken from a number of sources, erring on the side of caution by taking the lowest levels. Levels are measured in mg/m³ and averaged out over an 8 hour day, 5 day week, so if you just do pottery one day a week your dust levels can safely be 5 times higher.

Substance	Inhalable dust, mg/m ³ TWA	Respirable dust, mg/m ³ TWA
General dust	10	1.3
Aluminium oxide, talc		1
Silica, amorphous	6	
Zinc, zirconium	5	
Tin	2	
Bone ash, copper	1	
Antimony, barium, chromium	0.5	
Manganese	0.1	0.02
Vanadium	0.05	
Silica, crystalline		0.025
Cobalt	0.02	
Nickel	0.015	

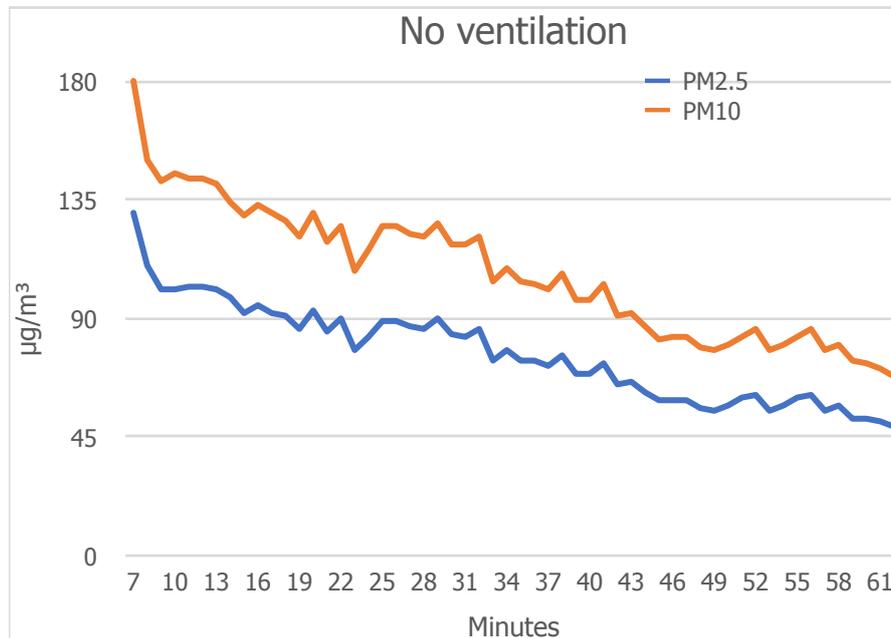
Looking at this, the general dust level for inhalable dust is higher than you would want to work in, and the levels for other substances are quite low considering the quantities we use, except possibly if you use black clay with a lot of manganese in. The real challenge is the amount of respirable crystalline silica, particularly when you remember that ball clay, for example, can be up to 50% crystalline silica. Again, manganese can be a concern if you use a lot of high manganese clay. But, for most people, if you crack the silica problem, everything else falls into place.

But how much dust might there be floating round your studio? Using a dust meter, in my studio I had a background reading of up to 0.04 mg/m³ PM₁₀, 0.03 mg/m³ PM_{2.5}. This could double or triple if just doing general things. Activities that pushed the dust meter over its maximum reading of 1 were things like mixing large quantities of glaze, sanding or grinding fired work, or cleaning with a broom or a non-HEPA vacuum cleaner (a HEPA one didn't affect dust levels) – and these readings came down after a few minutes as the particles dispersed round the studio.

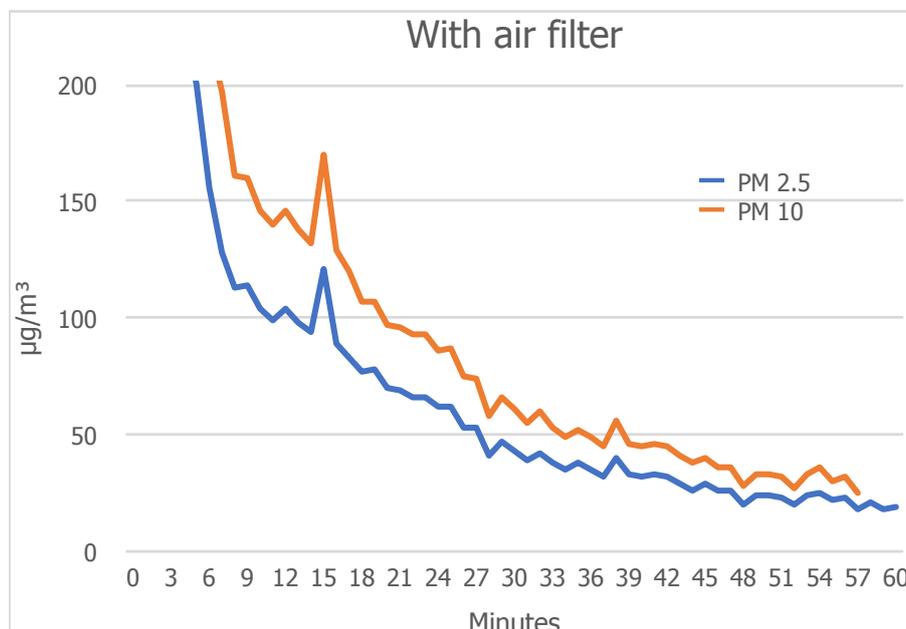
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Something in the Air - Tim Thornton cont.

However once the dust had dispersed, it still takes a long time to settle – especially the most harmful small particles that can stay in the air for many hours. The first graph shows this, with it taking about 45 minutes for the dust levels to halve. So don't take your respirator off as soon as you've finished that dusty job!



What can we do about this? Ventilating the room makes a big difference, either by having a couple of windows open so air can flow through your studio, or by having a fan push air through a suitable filter to trap the dust particles. Ideally we want 5 or 6 air changes per hour. The graph below shows this, using a fan with a dust extracting filter attached, and you can see how much more quickly the dust level comes down in the room.



So by having some ventilation in your studio, you help keep the general dust level low, and when you do something that creates a lot of dust it brings the dust level down much more quickly, so you don't have to wear your respirator for as long a time.

If you want to learn more about how to run your studio safely, go to www.tim-thornton.com and look at the online course I give on it.

A Failure - Neil Dewey



An umbrella pot for our hall: this would make full use of my kiln as it would be about 30cm diam x 45cm pre-firing. It would be a challenge, the largest thing I've ever made to stretch my skills. At that size I would have to throw a bottom then a baseless top and fit it upside down while still on its batt, something I have done when experimenting with moon pots. The other way, the one I chose was to hand-build. I would revive a method used successfully at a smaller scale and cut "coils" from slabs assembling them by scoring and slip jointing as with a slabbed container. The "coils" were 30x17mm, Clayman's Wessex Mixture, a grogged stoneware for hand-building. Once the compressed joint had gone off a little the lightly curved end of a throwing stick was used across it as with rolled coils. The walls received a preliminary fettle each day. About 10cm per day was added in the morning, and allowed to stiffen during the afternoon in a studio temperature of 12-15C. This was to aid stability for the next raise. It was then covered in polythene overnight to equalise the moisture content between the new and old as much as possible. I hoped there would be a gentle evolving moisture equilibrium until completion to reduce drying stresses.



The completed form was scraped and smoothed to an approximate thickness of less than 15mm, with the green pot being about 29cm at its widest and 44cm high. Decorated with painted and spattered slips it was left to dry in the unheated studio for about a week then another two weeks in the house. I was pretty pleased with the result thus far, so much so that a Maltby was moved from its plinth to make way for my pot as it dried in an open position at a more or less constant temperature of 22C. When my hand and cheek test suggested it was dry I left it another three days before firing.



ready for firing

A Failure - Neil Dewey cont.

Ah, the curse of Hubris! I've had almost no hand-building failures, or blown pots, (plenty of glaze disappointments, but that's another story). The bisque fire was completed on 28 Feb with my top loading kiln propped open 2cm at 128C. As usual it was left about an hour before fully opening. The pot was in one piece but was riven by a wide crack through the rim and down to the base. This went right through the pot wall with a couple of short horizontal "jigs" in its journey at what were almost certainly joints. The cracks on either side of the "jig" were much thinner, and run only part way around the circumference. There was no evidence of any moisture blows along the course of the vertical crack (or in isolation on the surface) and the few small holes in the horizontal appear to be the result of the shearing (but what do I know!). In addition and un-photographed there was a crack inside between the base and body, but not right through to the outside, along about half of the circumference and centred approximately on the the vertical crack.



LH Photo
1.2cm between
vertical cracks

RH photo
large breakout
0.9cm wide



We learn from mistakes - but what were they? What caused the stress in the firing and when did it occur? Most probably during the cooling but when the kiln was opened a touch, or well before? Did it cool too quickly, exaggerating the inevitable stresses of firing? Comparing the cooling phase of my typically well-loaded kiln to this solitary large pot the difference was two hours - down from 10.5 to 8.5hrs with it falling 200C in the first half hour from 1000C compared to over an hour usually. I only have a simple controller, so next time I'll try restarting it at 1000C to fire the kiln down slowly - it can't do any harm even if that isn't the reason for failure as more organics should burn off reducing the chance of glaze pin-holing, (so the internet suggests).

All of the cracks are connected, so did the inevitable shrinkage stresses must have built generally until there was a single cataclysmic release of stress, firing off a road-map of weaknesses? Or did smaller failures meet? Might the clay thickness be too great? Certainly the pot was heavy, 20 lb after bisque-ing, but the walls were pretty even and measurement suggests they weren't overly thick in proportion to the pot. Was the rim of the pot at 2cm below the kiln lid too high? Perhaps the heat sink effect of the pot sitting on the kiln base set the stresses off (online advice suggests this, but I usually place pots on a kiln shelf which is directly on the kiln base with no problems)?

I'm no nearer to knowing what the causes were. We all have failures - an entire kiln-worth smarts and there's the excessive pride punctured. I'll try this method again but let this failure settle in first, see if I come across advice which may help me avoid it next time. In the meantime I'm waiting for a slightly shorter version to dry. It was thrown in two parts with the final 5 cm and rim constructed from extruded round coils.

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Newsletter Matters

Please send contributions to: neilhdewey@gmail.com
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Photos and other images. Please send these as separate **.jpg** files. If your document contains embedded photos that is not a problem as it shows me where they should be placed but I always need them as separate files as well with descriptive file name please, (e.g. Fred blue pot).

Neil Dewey

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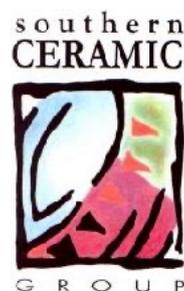
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