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Editorial

It's said that no news is good news. It might also be said that no pottery news is bad news - and we have a lot of both. Or perhaps to refine my observation, I should say the bad news that continues has reduced our members' opportunities to exhibit and promote their work in our newsletter. The only consolation may be that from our isolation in our garages, sheds and studios great new ideas will right now be emerging and that our craft will continue to bring us comfort and peace. Happy New Year.

Neil Dewey

Group News

SCG AGM AND LIVE DEMONSTRATION

The next live demonstration will be by Gareth Mason at Porchester Community Centre, Westlands Grove, Porchester, Farnham, PO16 9AD, on Sunday 23 January 2022 from 10.00am until 4.00pm. Our 2022 AGM will take place during the lunch break. Further information will be emailed to members.

SCG ZOOM LECTURES

Forthcoming speakers are:

Toby Duncan in January. Toby is from Norfolk, and lives in Cambridge. Another lover of rich surfaces, but very different from Paul Wearing's approach (December's lecture), applied to his sculptural forms. He will be talking about his work and the micro-sized wood fired kiln that he has built.

We also have the following waiting in the wings, with dates yet to be finalised:

Nic Collins, renowned for his wood firing:

www.nic-collins.co.uk

Kevin Millward, long time potter and instructor, and one of the driving forces behind setting up Clay College:

www.kevinmillwardceramics.co.uk

Sam Lucas, creates ceramic sculptures as highly abstracted humanoid forms:

www.sam-lucas.com

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

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Our next meeting will be on Sunday 13 March.

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.

The Clay Connection presents

CHICHESTER
FESTIVAL
THEATRE

VOICES FROM THE KILN

A solo by Vidya
Thirunarayan

A performance that interweaves
Bharatanatyam dance, film, text,
and clay.

A visceral and evocative
performance that echoes with
stories of dirt, displacement, and
toil... revealing our human need to
belong.

Performance will appeal to audiences
of all ages. It will be followed by
an interactive space, Café Clay.

18 January 2022

Minerva Theatre

Box Office: 01243 781312 / box.office@cft.org.uk



Artist Opportunity

Little Forest Open Competition 2022

Display your work at
Art in the Garden 2022
plus £100 'production fund'

Little Forest Land Art founders Jan Griffiths
& Adrian Mundy are looking for an exciting
artwork to feature on their '4th Plindy' for
Art in the Garden 2022, an annual open
studio event in the Hampshire countryside,
north of Fareham, featuring work from
numerous artists and makers.

Judges:
Vickie Fear, Curator/Programme Manager, Aspex
Portsmouth; Rosie Wesley, Metalwork Designer &
Chalk's Gallery Director & our winner from 2020/1,
plus LFLA's Jan & Adrian

FREE
ENTRY

Full details: www.littleforestlandart.co.uk
Closing date: 24th January 2022



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Glaze Group November 2021

Minutes of Zoom meeting 10 November 2021

Attendees: Ruth Green, Jan Griffiths, Kevin Green, Tony Thompson.

RUTH GREEN

Ruth has had many problems with her electric kiln resulting in having to have it taken away by Northern Kilns (whom she recommends for great service) for repair. Meanwhile she has had her gas kiln commissioned and she talked about the first firing of this with mixed results. It fired very quickly and overfired, running glazes onto the kiln shelves but there was a good reduction and the cones were totally flattened (including a cone 10). Compared to work fired in the electric kiln Ruth felt there is some way to go to get the results she desires. It was recommended that she inserts a thermocouple and also places the cones where they are more easily visible perhaps with no work placed directly behind. We look forward to seeing the next firing.



Left-hand image gas fired, right hand electric fired with same glaze techniques – shows a much cleaner/lighter decoration.

JAN GRIFFITHS

Jan had no work to show but opened up a debate on the use of fossil fuels and the use of `new` minerals, after reading a Crafts Council article and being aware of recent commitments to climate change. On ceramics the article clearly specifies that the use of gas and other fossil fuels should be eliminated/reduced, so we talked about our own practices and what we are individually doing to mitigate damage and reduce our ecological impact.

We decided the subject is `tricky` as those of us who use gas and wood, oxides and minerals may need to rethink our practices. The cost of some fuels and minerals has already escalated and we expect this to continue, which may make our end product potentially more expensive and perhaps unviable. Some of us will be giving up gas/raku kilns and making sure we buy electricity from 100% renewable resources. John Leach many years ago planted a forest for his practice of future wood burning – does this mitigate the damage? Do we check where our raw materials are coming from? Many clays are imported from as far away as Australia – is that OK?

Food for thought.

Interesting articles from the Crafts Council:

[How to make your pottery practice greener \(craftscouncil.org.uk\)](https://craftscouncil.org.uk/how-to-make-your-pottery-practice-greener/)
[7 makers and studios turning ceramics green \(craftscouncil.org.uk\)](https://craftscouncil.org.uk/7-makers-and-studios-turning-ceramics-green/)

minutes cont. on next page

KEVIN AKHURST

Kevin has been experimenting with inlay having seen this in practice when he was in China. He enjoyed the sharp/crisp lines this technique could offer. Using a buff stoneware he carved grooves onto the pots when they were leather hard. These grooves were then filled with a thick slip coloured with black stain and then scraped back once bone dry. They were glazed with a shino and unfortunately there was much pitting around the grooved inlays on both a white and black stained slip. We suggested trying a slightly wetter first coat of slip – rather like a primer before applying a second thicker slip and Kevin felt he may try this next time.



Kevin also showed us a beautiful large shallow bowl made by Jill Fanshaw-Kato. She has clearly used a white slip with natural fern leaf as a resist and also some paper resist spaces for the birds. She has scrafftoided part of the bird and coloured with underglaze stains. A final slightly tinted glaze was applied. The underside of the bowl was just as interesting also with a fern leaf design and a deeper shade of glaze. Jill was originally trained as a painter and has clearly taken these skills to her ceramic practice.



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/community>

If you visit you will find announcements, details about events and photos. Members who have 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.

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. Two videos on You Tube will guide you through the necessary steps - there are others.

How to Setup a Facebook Account

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_zf5q0oS0FM

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

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

Finally

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

CHANGE AND CONTINUANCE

Members will have learned through recent emails that Tim Thornton is moving from our area so he will no longer run our Social Media. We thank him for his enormous contribution to the Group in pushing us forward in the use of the internet, particularly valuable in the era of Covid restrictions.

We welcome Katharine Schafli who has agreed to take up his role.

Our media 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)

A PLEA FROM KATHARINE SCHAFLI

The SCG Facebook and Instagram accounts need our support.

In the run up and during the Summer Exhibition these pages naturally become an opportunity for us to showcase members' diverse range of work. During the rest of the year the pages are quite dormant, but don't have to be. And the more active we are through the year, the better the reach and results will be in the summer.

The only way to keep SCG social channels active is to feed it with engaging content that receives likes, comments and shares, and that has to come from the generosity of our members - you! So if you're trying something new, a different glaze, new clay body, different effect or firing, why not let people know? Anything you have seen you want to try? Or just want to quickly get a message to the group (and public) about an event you're hosting?

Here are three easy ways you can help keep our pages open and interesting for everyone:

- 1) You can **share your idea and progress immediately** onto the [SCG facebook Community Page](#). This is a simple and easy way to share with our community 24/7 all year long. Tag in your website, social tags or other collaborators, add your own images. This is unfiltered!
- 2) **Have your work or event on the main page.** Please do participate with your contributions. Send your message to our social media manager/s and up to five images via the **Send Message** button on facebook or Instagram. We will load the post to go out for you onto the main feed, which appears 'endorsed' by the group.

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Social Media - cont.

- 3) **Give it clout.** Make a comment, give it a heart, share and please ask the contributors questions (@ their name directly). Please signpost @SouthernCermaicsGroup #SouthernCeramicsGroup when posting your work on your social channels.

Remember to add your own facebook and instagram name/account details or #hashtags to your membership renewal form. It is our hope we can follow all members on Instagram, and support your work and events.

Please follow @SouthernCermaicsGroup social pages on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#), and share your ideas to help keep the social media channels alive with me.

Thanks everyone.

Katharine Schafli (SCG Social Media) katharinesonline@gmail.com

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 now email Cabby Luxford who has agreed to look after this.

cabbyattilecottage@gmail.com

Members Profile - Kevin Akhurst

It was being an empty nester that led me to pottery. When our daughter went to university my wife and I discussed how we might use the expected free time. I'm not sure where the idea of pottery came from. In part I thought with my technical background I could learn precisely how to produce superb glazes, which I realise now was a little naïve. I went to evening class for a year, which was rather frustrating. Progress seemed so slow when we only had one session a week and much of that was spent catching up with my classmates and clearing away half-finished work before the end of the session. Then I went to Art in Clay at Hatfield, and after a visit to the trade tent I unexpectedly went home with a wheel and an electric kiln. Even then, with a high pressure job I didn't have much time to pot and it was only really when I retired that I could get serious. To mark my retirement I bought myself a gas top-loader and started firing in reduction.



I think personal taste in pottery takes time to develop. The more pots you look at the more you see. I feel a bit unoriginal to admit that as I read about pottery and looked at pots my tastes went in the direction of oriental pottery and the Leach tradition. It took a while for my wife to understand what I liked in brown pots but she now has a potter's eye as well. I hope my tastes are a bit more sophisticated nowadays but I still like vessels with a functional pedigree, subtle complex glazes and simple abstract decoration which conveys energy and movement.

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Members Profile - Kevin Akhurst cont.



I have always made stoneware, mainly to get the complex glazes I like. At the high temperatures of stoneware firing more chemical changes can happen in the glaze. In particular, the glaze interacts with the clay underneath so that the composition and appearance of the glaze varies with glaze thickness and with depth below the surface. A few years ago I built a wood-fired kiln in my garden, which I could use for salt and soda glazing, adding yet more variation to the surfaces of my pots. As the kiln was cross-draft my pots gained distinct front and back surfaces from the direct impact of the flames.



Even now I'm retired there are many other calls on my time so I spend about two days a week in my studio. It takes me about six months to make enough pots to fill my kiln (about 50 pots depending on their size) and I have settled into a routine of two firings a year. After each firing I spend time thinking about how to develop my work for the next one – not easy for me, but enjoyable. I consider what worked and didn't work in the previous firing, as well as looking for ideas from other people's work. I'm lucky that, as I don't have to earn a living from pottery, I can please myself what I make, but I have to admit it is nice when someone likes one of my pots well enough to buy it.

www.kevinakhurst.com

Firing Up - Tim Thornton

Many people have bought their first kiln during lockdown, or may be treating themselves or being treated to one at Christmas. So I thought it would be timely to cover some points on using your electric kiln.



Beginning with installation, you need to position the kiln so you have good access to the power switch and controller, and for loading and unloading the kiln; having a worktop or shelving nearby is useful to put the pots on. You also need to ensure that it is not too close to the walls. This depends on the kiln, and you should follow the manufacturer's guidelines for this. The kiln needs to be placed on a heat and fireproof surface, such as a concrete floor, or a layer of paving slabs put down over a wooden floor, extending 30cm beyond the kiln. If you have wooden walls or ceiling, you should ensure that the wood's surface temperature stays below 70°C to avoid any fire risk – you can measure this by borrowing the meat thermometer from the kitchen, and pressing it on to the surfaces at the top of the firing. This temperature may seem low, but over the long term a repeated exposure to higher temperatures reduces the ignition point.

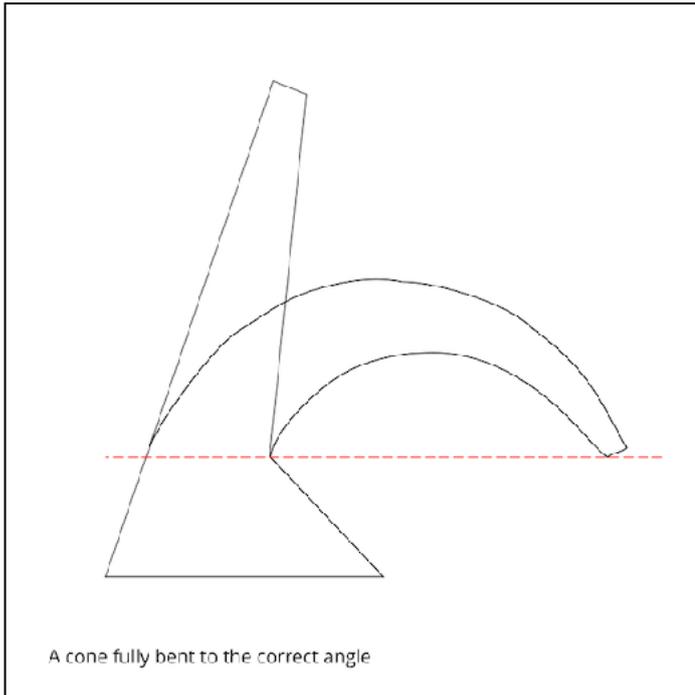
For electricity, most kilns will need to be wired directly into the consumer unit (or distribution box). There should also be a twin pole isolator switch in an accessible position, so you can easily switch off the power (whilst a cooker switch may theoretically do the job for smaller kilns, I've had them fail as they aren't designed for running a long time at full power). Small kilns may be able to plug in to a normal 13A wall socket, but this is quite a heavy load. If possible, I'd have it permanently wired in with an isolator switch. If you can't do that, then periodically check if the plug or socket are getting warm during the firing, which normally means loose connections and a risk of either the firing stopping, or a fire starting.

Ventilation is a concern to many – particularly in the USA, where some people seem to think that firing without a kiln vent is lethal! Looking at actual kiln measurements, the biggest source of fumes is organic matter burning out at bisque temperatures (e.g. organic material in ball clay, paper in paper clay, wax resist, gums in glazes etc). This can be an irritant, and some react more strongly to the fumes than others, but isn't going to be toxic in a typical sized studio. Metal fumes are a potter's myth as far as health hazards are concerned, with one study of over 50 kilns finding that none reached even 10% of hazardous levels. I'd say that if you are sensitive to the fumes even with the window open, or your studio is connected to your house, then you need ventilation. This could be a kiln vent, or an extractor fan with a capacity of at least 5 air changes per hour. The extractor fan will also keep dust down in the studio and, if the studio is connected to the house, draw air in from the house so dust and smells are kept confined to the studio.

Your kiln's elements are protected by forming a layer of aluminium oxide on the surface. Whenever you have new elements (or a new kiln) it is good practice to fire the kiln empty to 1050°C, building up a protective layer before any pots are put into the kiln, which may release fumes that can corrode the elements.

If your kiln has a K type thermocouple, fitted as standard to US kilns such as Skutt, Paragon and L&L, you should calibrate the kiln on first firing and every dozen or so subsequent firings, as they are not very accurate – errors may be $\pm 10^{\circ}\text{C}$ when new, increasing with age. The R or S types used by most UK and European kiln manufacturers are accurate to a couple of degrees, and don't degrade with time. To calibrate, we use cones. Look at the Orton cones temperature table for self-supporting cones (easier to use than the large cones, for which you need to make a holder). You can get this at: <https://www.ortonceramic.com/files/2676/File/Orton-Cone-Chart-C-022-14-2016.pdf>. Look up the cone equivalent for your top glaze temperature when firing at 60°C/hr (not all kilns can fire at 150°C/hr, and you need to match the Orton firing rate). Load the kiln as normal, but with your target cone positioned close to the thermocouple, and arrange things so you can see it from a spyhole. Now program the kiln to fire at 60°C/hr to 10°C above your normal temperature. Check the cones as the thermocouple temperature approaches the middle cone temperature. When that cone is fully bent (**as in the diagram on next page**) make a note of the thermocouple temperature, and switch the kiln off. The difference between the thermocouple temperature and the cone's temperature is the thermocouple error, and this should be entered into the kiln controller. Repeated looking into the hot kiln will damage your eyes with time, so if you find yourself doing this regularly protect your eyes with a pair of #3 welder's goggles – not sunglasses or ski goggles!

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The final thing to do is to see how fast your kiln can fire. The ramp that you enter into your controller is often like a child's presents list – wishful thinking! If your kiln isn't powerful enough to do what you ask, it will do the best it can, but the firing will not be what you expected. The best way to measure this is to load your kiln fully for a glaze firing, and set the ramp to Max. Now record the temperature every 10 or 15 minutes through the firing, and calculate the actual ramp rate as °C/hr – you will find that this starts off pretty high, and then slows down as the temperature increases. There is no point putting a ramp higher than this into your controller, as the kiln won't be able to achieve it. And as you use your kiln more, your elements will lose some of their youthful vigour, and the ramp rate will reduce. To ensure consistent firings regardless of the number of pots in the kiln (with fewer pots allowing a faster ramp) or the age of the elements, I take the maximum measured ramp rate with a full kiln, round it down by about 10°C/hr, and use that as the maximum ramp in my firing programs – though you could use a faster ramp rate for lower temperature firings if you wanted to. Using the max ramp rate setting in the controller will result in inconsistent firings.

Now the kiln is all set up and ready to go, firing just the way you tell it to – so you can't blame it if pots come out differently from how you expected!

Tim Thornton runs online courses on electric kilns and firing, studio health and safety, and product safety for potters, as well as face to face courses.

For more information, go to <https://tim-thornton.com/courses-2> .

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Newsletter Matters

Please send contributions to: neilhdewey@gmail.com
Next Newsletter due: 1 April 2022
Next Copy Deadline: 14 March 2022

Keep me posted, please, at any time before the deadline with your news of galleries and exhibitions showing your work, studio tips, memories, and especially images that might be shared.

Photos and other images. Please send these as separate **.jpg** files. If your document contains embedded photos that is not a problem as it shows me where they should be placed but I always need them as separate files as well with descriptive file name please, (e.g. Freda blue pot). And please remember the reproduction limitations of the newsletter if viewing your technical or aesthetic detail clearly is paramount.

Neil Dewey

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Interested in advertising in the Southern Ceramic Group Newsletter?
If so please contact Rolf Hawkins: rookerypotts@gmail.com

The rates for advertising are:

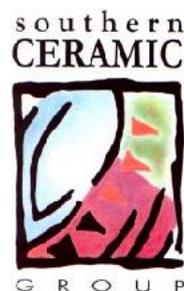
SCG Members: Free
Commercial B&W/Colour:
Full Page £20
Half Page £10
Quarter Page £5

New Members

Interested in becoming a member of the Southern Ceramic Group?
Application forms can be found on the Group's website at:
<https://www.southernceramicgroup.org.uk/join/>

Acknowledgments

Thanks go to regular contributors to the Newsletter and all the new ones prepared to have a go and submit something.



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