



ScottishPottersAssociation

newsletter
winter

2003



- © arran weekend report
- © botanics exhibition details
- © spa news and plans

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editorial

comment

editorial

This year we've had the best summer for a very long time but next year promises to be even better - and that's no matter the weather. A birthday is always a good thing and we want everyone to join in the party spirit.

Throughout this issue you will see plans for the year - but so far there's been a resounding silence from my readership. Please **please** send me in your memories and pictures of 30 years of SPA, your favourite Kinfauns / Kindrogan weekends or demonstrators, your best or funniest stories of SPA activities, the friends you have made, the places you have visited, the tips you have learned, **the pleasure it's given you!!** I hope these thoughts will jog your memory - before 10 January! Otherwise it'll be my special issue rather than yours!

It's true there's a lot to remember just now. I hope you're all getting lots of inspiration from the beautiful Botanic Gardens throughout the country in time for that deadline (16 January); that you'll respond promptly to Anne Lightwood's request for participation; and that you'll get your bookings off for the 2004 Kindrogan early - oh and your membership confirmed and paid in time!!

Just to prove I'm well ahead myself, I've even treated you to a couple of ideas to help your Christmas shopping.

Finally a big thank you to all my contributors throughout the year - it is **much** appreciated. Fiona is one of the best of course and I'd like to wish her and Brian every success with the opening of Watergaw Ceramics.

from the chairman

Well the floor is sanded and nearly sealed and by the time you read this the opening of Watergaw Ceramics in the former Methodist Church in Whitehills will have come and gone! I was reminded the other night as I fretted over all that was still to be done that the 25th of October was just the beginning and not the end. It is very easy to get carried away and not see the obvious in front of your face!

I am pleased to hear that the Distance Learning at Glasgow School of Art is also up and running, congratulations to all those SPA members who are part of the group - we await the outcome with eager anticipation.

Ceramica Botanica has a new (and we hope final) name. Please take time to read Anne Lightwood's article (*opposite*) as it affects all of the SPA and we hope all members will play a part in this profile raising, prestigious event.

Kindrogan 2004 is taking shape, and for all you new members, Kindrogan is open to everyone of all levels and abilities, and it's usually a weekend to remember, sometimes for very strange reasons, but usually for good ones.

I am a firm believer in keeping Christmas in December, but as I will not be communicating with you all again until 2004 I would like to take this opportunity to wish you a productive and rewarding festive season and all that you could wish for yourselves in 2004.

Fiona

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COVER PHOTO
Simon Thorborn
- in the heat of the action
Arran SPA October weekend

pick of the bunch

- clay in bloom -

For a variety of reasons our original choice of title, *Ceramica Botanica - Blooming Clay*, did not find favour with our colleagues at Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE). Asked for something which implied both selection and quality, after much head scratching we have come up with 'PICK OF THE BUNCH' with a 'strapline' of Clay in Bloom. We hope this will remain without further changes and that SPA members will agree that it expresses our aims.

venue & dates

The venue is confirmed as the main Exhibition Hall at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh.

The dates - not finalised - are expected to be during August and September 2004 - a period which takes in school holidays, and the Edinburgh International Festival, when the Gardens are at their busiest with visitors.

selection info

Details were sent with the last newsletter and are unchanged.

Slides must be received by Friday 16 January 2004.

selection panel chosen

The panel will consist of:

Jim Robison

Ruthanne Tudball - both respected potters and already well known to SPA members as demonstrators

Rose Watban - Curator of Glass & Ceramics, Royal Museum of Scotland

The Exhibitions Officer, RBGE

Fiona Duckett - Chair, SPA.

scottish tour

Plans still at the embryonic stage, but the exhibition is likely to go to at least one of the regional gardens - Benmore - during 2005.

development

Our Development Officer, Vanessa Morris, is highly experienced, but the work she can do is restricted by time and resources. Her remit therefore covers the areas where we do **not** have expertise, concentrating on turning ideas into viable projects, dealing with official forms, preparing budgets, and sourcing possible funding and grants. The SPA sub-committee is likewise concentrating on areas where they can provide input based on their knowledge of members' skills and interests.

demos / masterclasses

Information and educational content will be an important element in making the exhibition enjoyable and

understandable to everyone. A classroom space will be available for this aspect of the programme. We want to work out the best ways of achieving this at a cost which we will be able to fund.

This is where **all SPA members** (whether exhibiting or not) can have a direct input, and where **we need your help and ideas**.

can you help?

During the exhibition, we plan to make the weekends a time for "hands on" events of interest to a public which will include many families.

We thought of themed weeks - hand building, tiles, or porcelain for example; or talks and exhibition tours discussing the work on show. Some contact with local schools is also anticipated.

For this we need input from the SPA membership so that we know which ideas we could pursue before making a programme and committing ourselves to such a big organisational effort.

So please think of what you might be able to do that would be of interest and would fit into such a scheme, and let us know NOW.

We know summer is a busy time for those with shops and workshops, but perhaps with enough notice you could plan it in - and enjoy a few days in a beautiful setting as well. Those who did the demonstrations at Potfest found it rewarding, both financially and in making contact with prospective customers.

CD & video

Another strand in the education and information part of the exhibition; the CD is planned as a resource for school project work, with sales expected to recoup the production costs for the CD and the video.

Sadly it would not be feasible to tour Scotland to film the video - but with modern digital editing techniques, good quality images (digital or printed) can be incorporated into the chosen format (e.g. showing finished work, or demonstrating particular making methods). **This would allow a large number of members to become involved.** As many of you also teach classes, we're hoping to be bombarded with original ideas for consideration.

shop & sales

Work shown in the main exhibition will remain on show until the close in October, and may remain for the duration of the tour depending on capacity elsewhere. We are also negotiating a separate space for additional sales during the Edinburgh run, to be open to all members, not just those with work in the exhibition.

your input

If you have interesting ideas to share please get in touch NOW.

It seems a long way ahead but RBGE needs to have all information a minimum of three months in advance, for inclusion in programmes etc. There is a lot to deal with and your voluntary SPA sub-committee will be coordinating much of it.

There won't be time for multiple reminders - so do it now!!!

Please contact Anne Lightwood, 6 Lade Braes, St Andrews, Fife KY16 9ET. Tel: 01334 476388

e-mail: lightwood@ladebraes.freeserve.co.uk

STOP PRESS

Some recent changes in personnel at RBGE may affect certain aspects of the information given above. A meeting in November should confirm the major details.

raku round the clock

Normally our weekend is for sleeping in.....at least until 9:00 am! But this Saturday we headed out on the first ferry to Arran at 7:00 am. Racing along a lone, dark road, the anticipation built as I recalled sailing over for our annual summer holidays when the children were young. It always seems to take longer getting there than coming home. The ferry was nearly empty. I searched for a familiar face. The morning sunrise cast a magical, golden glow over the island as we approached. We had plenty of time to re-acquaint ourselves with the island as we drove up to Lochranza and over towards Blackwaterfoot. Not obvious from the road, we arrived at the signposted Balmichael and went into the warm and empty tea-room to wait for the rest of the SPA visitors to arrive. I recognised **Simon Thorborn** when he came outside to check on the kiln, preparing for the raku weekend. Unbeknown to me, the visitors had already gathered inside and were chatting and drinking their teas and coffees!

The Balmichael visitor centre is a converted farm steading which includes Simon's pottery, 3 very different gift shops, a tea-room, an antique shop, children's play area, a helicopter touring centre and a 4x4 track. It's fairly central on the island, easy to get to and an ideal set up for attracting visitors. Simon's pottery building originally functioned as the dairy. He set up on his own here six years ago after feeling a slave to the wheel in the production pottery where he served as an apprentice. He now has the independence to do his own work and experiment with his own glazes and firings.

The shop and studio space is separated by a counter, which one would guess is useful for keeping out the general public. Not necessarily so! Aside from the stoneware and raku ware for sale on the shelves, visitors are invited to paint their own mug, jug, bowl or plate. Fired blanks are bought in and decorated with commercial glazes and a neat little discovery called Bumpy Doodles which is similar to sliptrail or tube lining. The work is fired and ready for uplifting within a couple of days. This has proved to be a profitable venture and even all the primary schools on Arran have gotten in on the action! Janet looks after the centre from Friday to Sunday to give Simon a break and to learn the trade.

Although Simon produces stoneware, **we were there primarily for the Raku**. His vessels are the most striking, with a bellied body and a trumpet like neck, bringing Lucie Rie forms to mind. He throws them in two pieces and they can measure up to a couple of feet in height. His choice of clay for Raku is Spencroft crank, from Staffordshire.

Simon quietly threw his forms in the 'Stoke' throwing method lifting the pot at the 6:30 position, with the clay moving away from him, using a sponge to pull up the pot. A few years back at Kindrogan, Brian and Simon traded their submissions to the Alasdair Dunn award, so it was clear they admired each others work. So it wasn't surprising that Brian soon got into the act showing his 'Pictish' (!) method, lifting the same form at the 3:00 position and using a rib to lift the pot.

At the turning stage, the neck is smoothed with a bent spoon but not actually burnished. In Simon's experience, carbonisation is less effective when the clay is left rough. His raku glaze decoration is confined to the bellied base while the trumpet neck takes on the carbonisation. He decorates the belly using three different glazes brushed on and overlapping and then finishes off with flourishes in the Bumpy Doodles.

Another technique he uses is one by David Roberts; It employs a resist of slip, masking the design out in negative with wax resist, and finally a dip into crackle glaze. The resist of slip forms a barrier between the pot and glaze and the carbonisation impregnates the clay body through the crackle of the glaze.

We were then let loose with some glazes in preparation for the next day's firing. In the evening we gathered at the Kinloch Hotel for a bit of chat, bevvie and live music provided by Simon and his friends.

From 'A Boy Named Sue' to the 'Oooooo, La La La' song (answers on a postcard!!), the guitars, banjos, fiddles and bodhrans were out in full force.....It was a great night.

The following day.....the Raku firing!! Pieces were already in the kiln, firing, by the time we arrived. Other glazed ware was heating up on top of the kiln. Through the day there were 3 (or 4?) firings. Reduction took place in 'Edinburgh' buckets with sawdust in one and newspaper in the other. The ware was left in the buckets for about 20 minutes and then simply taken out to cool down naturally before being scrubbed. The raku colours that overlapped took on a special effect. The David Roberts



.....she said it was fun!.....



vessels by the ness

2003 Exhibition Review

technique pots needed to be scrubbed of the resist glaze and slip tricky because of the sharp crackle-glazed edges.

It was a super weekend.....just what was needed to inspire new work. A big, huge thanks to Simon and Janet, as well as Simon's musician buds who travelled to be at the Kinloch Hotel just for us! I am now looking forward to Kindrogan for some pointers on playing the bodhran, Simon!

Karen James

The 16th century Abertarff House in Inverness is this year's venue for the SPA members' exhibition. The exhibits had to be displayed beside the gallery's own crafts, which initially was confusing. There was great variety in the work shown, from impressive large plates by Brian Shand, Janet Adam and Stuart Whatley to beautiful landscape panels by Len Whatley.

A striking feature of the show was the humour in a lot of the work. There was a delightful group of Darinda Johnston's colourful nautical theme plates of waves & boats. Wenna Crockett's four boats with vertical figures had the same feeling of fun as had Ronna Elliott's tall jester figures and Miriam Reid's skilful Raku houses.

There were several well modelled animals - Sjarifah Roberts' stoat and dog, and a reclining dog (sorry potter unknown) with white crackle Raku glaze was impressive.

There were restrained pots too, including Veronica Newman's finely thrown and cut porcelain vases and bowls, Fiona Duckett's lustre bowl and candle holders and Jane Barker's elegant stoneware vases and lidded pot decorated with black and white slips and incised lines.

Hannah McAndrew's slipware jugs and posset pot were particularly attractive examples of more traditional ware.

Clare Smith

As a teacher with potting aspirations living next to Edinbane Pottery, filling my summer holidays has never been a problem. This summer was certainly busier than others though. I'd looked forward to working on the Arch at the West End, staying in Edinburgh selling pots by day, enjoying the Festival by night. Only 13 potters, £13K worth of pots to organise & handle - how hard could this be?

Actually, more than we anticipated! About half the potters had delivered their work to Edinburgh - kindly stored by Sandra & Neil Halley. The rest were collected as Len zig-zagged from Skye to Edinburgh in my Dad's 'rustic' transit van.

Len and brother Richard spent 2 long hot days building shelves and vandal proof doors on the Arch, and many generous friends gave of their time and strong limbs to shift and unpack all the boxes. It was interesting to handle the work of different makers and appreciate the uniqueness of each potter's chosen way of making glazing and firing. People were impressed and delighted at the variety of work displayed, and some recognised the work of 'their' potter or found a new favourite.

I very much enjoyed chatting to customers; describing where the potters were based, discussing pots, prices, presents, Highland holidays and of course selling beautiful pots! Throwing demonstrations on the Shippo wheel

SPA at EDINBURGH CRAFT FAIR

were fun, especially popular with children, the most demanding audience!

If only I could have taped all the positive and appreciative comments to feed back to the makers involved. The Potters Maps were uplifted in great numbers too and received much praise. I'm glad we took this opportunity to promote and sell Scottish Potters' work and help raise the profile of the SPA.

I have to admit to being more than a little weary by the time we dismantled the Arch, checked and packed pots and returned to Skye, but it was great fun and I learned a lot from the experience.

The organisers are very keen to have SPA return so I hope someone will offer to run the space next year - Len and I will definitely be unavailable as we are moving on to our next challenge, setting up a new pottery and home in Crieff.

Many thanks again to all the good people who helped us with this project - giving us accommodation, time, energy and expertise.

Rhoda Ferguson

P.S. A huge thank you to Rhoda and Len for their hard work in initiating this venture so successfully, and best wishes in their new surroundings.

the log book

What becomes of SPA Newsletter editors after departing their editorial chairs?

In the case of **Coll Minogue and Robert Sanderson** the answer is to design, edit and publish **The Log Book**; the international publication for woodfirers and those interested in woodfire ceramics. Now in its 4th year, The Log Book is building a following amongst woodfire potters and beyond. Coll and Robert are respected woodfire potters in their own right and no doubt this hard earned reputation helps elicit articles from equally committed and enthusiastic woodfirers. Potters are renowned for sharing information and for helping each other through technical and business difficulties. This spirit of community and self help seems to be especially strong amongst woodfirers and is really the *raison d'être* of this fine little magazine.

At first glance most articles are about building kilns or the finer aspects of kiln

design. But in reality the layout of the bricks is merely a starting point. Each issue of The Log Book features a number of kiln plans. After the trials and tribulations of their own kiln construction, or modification, it seems many woodfire potters are keen to pass on their knowledge to others about to embark on similar endeavours. There are no catalogues selling off-the-shelf wood kilns so they agonise long and hard about every element in their kiln's design.

There are a few books to answer some of their questions (notably Coll and Robert's own "Wood-Fired Ceramics: Contemporary Practice"). With technology and practices constantly changing, it needs a regular magazine to keep abreast of current developments and issues. Hence The Log Book is an essential conduit for exchanging and debating all aspects of building, firing, controlling and living with woodfire kilns.

Woodfire potters write about much loved (and respected), flame-breathing monsters. These are kilns with attitude intended to produce flame-licked pots with character!

The Log Book offers something to suit most interests. There have been articles on kilns from ground-hogs right through the gamut of naborigamas, anagamas and hikarigamas (climbing kilns); the history of woodfiring; woodfiring in education, and other related issues. It seems these potters are conference goers - most issues report on international conferences / workshops held almost anywhere in the world. Indeed this global span is evident from the back page Events Calendar with 7 upcoming woodfiring events in summer alone. There is more happening than you realise.

I am not a woodfire potter but find the articles in The Log Book riveting. I don't really know why but I suspect it has a lot to do with the total absence of pretentious

discussion of art values. These are articles by and for practical potters and I like that.

Let me end with a

quotation. It is the final paragraph of an article by Kevin Crowe and in my view captures the mystique and essence of firing a wood kiln.

"It is late at night on the third day of a firing. Steve is in the director's chair directing music. Linda and Scott are arm in arm, doing the background vocals and dance steps to Gladys Knight and the Pips version of Midnight Train to Georgia. Kai and Bram look up from a game of cards in the woodpile, not yet knowing they are watching stories they will tell their children. I take it in. Letting go - holding on. Good as it gets."

For more information

email Coll and Robert at thelogbook@eircom.net or visit the website <http://homepage.eircom.net/~thelogbook/>. A UK subscription currently costs £12.

Lyle Moar

review

XMAS BOOKLIST

This selection of books has been made on the basis of popularity, range of prices, and variety of subject matter. **Do not leave your order too late!**

Catrin Howell	Moira Vincentelli	7.50
Glazes Cone 6	Mike Bailey	12.99
Raku	John Mathieson	12.99
The Elements Of Design	Oie & Kegel	16.95
The Glaze Book	Stephen Murfitt	19.95
Smashing Glazes	Susan Peterson	19.99
The French Country Table	B. Duplessy	22.00
Paper Clay	Anne Lightwood	22.50
Extruded Ceramics	Diane Pancholi	25.00
Pots In The Kitchen	Jane Walter	25.00
Sources Of Inspiration	Carolyn Genders	30.00
Tiles & Tilework	Alan Graves	30.00
Kate Malone (A book of pots)	Jackson & Malone	35.00
Picasso, Painter & Sculptor In Clay	M. McCully	45.00

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Kindrogan Spring Weekend 2004
12-14 March

Just in case you've missed it, next year is the SPA's 30th Birthday, so we are hoping that Kindrogan will be a celebration of all that is best about the SPA. Places are limited and we expect demand to be high. So, when you get the application form through the letterbox, don't place it in the 'to be done' pile - do it straight away!

The following should whet your appetite! Former SPA member and top kiln-builder, **Joe Finch**, will be building a kiln to take some of your pots in its first firing. He will also be doing some throwing over the weekend. Many of you will have heard of him but if you would like to find out more you can visit his website www.joefinchkilns.co.uk. We are really pleased that Trudi his wife will be accompanying him.

Anne Lightwood has been a member of the SPA since the beginning and was one of the driving forces behind the SPA for many years. Anne will demonstrate printing on paper clay and hopes to have a 'hands on' element to her workshop. After seeing a demonstration at Aberystwyth, Anne became fascinated with the use of paperclay, which eventually led to her writing the book 'Working with Paperclay and other additives'.

We are also delighted to have **Martin Lungley** joining us to demonstrate. Martin is the author of 'Gardenware' (about - you guessed it - garden pots). Originally a production thrower of terracotta ware, Martin has more recently been throwing porcelain and if the skill that was evident at Aberystwyth is anything to go by, we are in for a treat. (I personally have been lusting over his beautiful elegant porcelain vases for quite some time!). He has also agreed to show us an unusual technique involving throwing and plaster moulds!

The above should be enough to set your head spinning, but, don't forget we will have John Lightbody and his Ceilidh band to really spin you around on the Saturday night!

Fiona Duckett



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And finally - Something Completely Different for some (adult) Christmas stockings.

Following close on the heels of Helen Mirren and Julie Walters come some very well-known 'calendar boys' from the ceramics scene - dubbed 'CLAYMATES' - going THE FULL MONTY to support the charity work of World Vision International in a potters project in East Timor.

Sara Bowie of Bowie & Hulbert, who dreamed up the calendar, explains: "The 12 potters weren't content to stay in the studio, and full use was made of locations - Plymouth Hoe, Eastnor Castle, and a rocky coastline provide the backdrop for some of the images. The finished photographs were far better than any of us could have imagined - it was very difficult to make the choice for the calendar but the final result is at last ready for full exposure!"

The Calendar (The Bare Facts) will be on sale from Bowie & Hulbert, 5 Market Street, Hay on Wye, Hereford, HR2 5AF Tel: 01497 821026.

Email: info@hayclay.co.uk and Contemporary Ceramics, 7 Marshall Street, London W1V 1LP Tel: 020 7437 7605. Cost £9.95 + £1.50 p&p.

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GRANTS OPPORTUNITY

Craft Pottery Charitable Trust
Grants to ceramicists and/or to educational activities related to ceramics. Annual call for Applications. Closing date for Grants from the Trust for 2003 is 15 December 2003 (decision by March 2004). Send SAE to Liz Gale, Taplands Farm Cottage, Webbs Green, Soberton, Southampton SO32 3PY. Further details from the Editor.

COMPETITION

Angus College Art Competition 2004. £4000 in prizes. Closing date for applications 5 Dec '03. Entry forms from Carol Findlay. Tel: 01241 432600 Fax: 01241 432620

EQUIPMENT

Kiln building, repairs & upgrades. Details from Sharon Dick on 01698 825168. (Vacua-Therm Sales Ltd)

PROJECT PARTNER

The Charles Wallace trust funds artists from india who have never been abroad and those who might do interesting work in the UK. An experienced potter of 29, Shirley writes: "My main interest in coming to the UK is for sharing of ideas and working with an artist or group of ceramic artists who have specialised in some technique or idea so we can integrate our thoughts to create a new body of installation based work". She has just finished a big project for the Hyatt Hotel in Bombay. Further details from Val or Fiona: Tel nos on page 2

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deadline for inclusion
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