



Bucks Pottery and Sculpture Society

Newsletter, October 2025

Hi members.

Welcome to the October newsletter. This features the summer events including the extra workshops which have been very inspiring.

They have become a standard part of the BPSS holiday season and have been enjoyed by many members.

Elaine Wells and Sophie Smith have given us some useful tutoring so we are very appreciative of their expert advice. I hope you've got your thinking caps on for the annual competition, unless you've already completed your entry! Happy reading, Yvonne.

Visit to Discover Bucks Museum Store & Tring Museum – Madalyn, Paula & Yvonne

On 2nd June several Bucks Potters had a very interesting visit to the Discover Bucks Museum Resource Centre in Halton, followed by a visit to Tring Museum for the 'Mystery of the Tring Tiles'.

At Halton we were shown some of their ancient pottery from the area. It was fascinating to have a brief run through of ceramics from each period of history from expert Brett Thorne, the Archaeology Curator. Hearing about and being able to handle 4,000 year old archaeological pots was quite magical! The most exciting piece was the oldest intact pot in their collection – a Neolithic pot from Eton Dorney which was over 5000 years old! Seeing the intricate decoration that someone had meticulously spent time achieving so long ago was amazing (see right).

We saw the encaustic Penn floor tiles which were mass produced in the small villages of Penn and Tylers Green in the 1400's. They were made using the inlay method of white clay being pressed into terracotta clay (see left). It's absolutely amazing that these industry centres were on our doorstep 700 years ago. It made us appreciate how important pottery is – not just aesthetically but also as they were used by the archaeologist for use in dating – as pots don't rot!!

We were also given a guided tour of their large collection of studio ceramics which is kept in a series of eye level glass fronted cabinets down a long corridor. They have examples of work by many famous potters such as John Maltby, Lucie Rie, Ian Godfrey, Janet Leach, Peter Hayes, etc (see right).

From there, we drove to Tring Local History Museum for a guided tour of their 14th Century ceramic floor tiles which used the sgraffito method of surface decoration. These featured playful caricatures – imaginary stories of Jesus Christ as a child.



According to the tiles he played mischievous tricks on his friends using his powers with ill intent.

He also had the power to reverse the malicious results! They used a device of showing the dead person upside down (see tile on left) – a remarkable way of representing death!



Madalyn handles an ancient pot as Paula looks on.



YouTube recommendations – Paula Sutton

'Using a Car Dent Puller to Glaze Pottery' by Old Forge Creations – Joe Thompson

There are two videos on this subject - one from five years ago (13 minutes) & an update from this year (1 minute). His channel has various short videos on tips & tricks that are worth checking out and, as he is a UK potter, the tools he mentions are actually easy to get hold of! Well worth a look. The Gunson 77091 Mini Dent Puller that he recommends can be bought at Halfords (£10.49), or on Amazon (£9.09).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91osWtIsjLE&t=10s>



'Altering Pots to Integrate Form with Surface Illustration' – Mel Griffin

'Altering pots to integrate form with surface' (by Ceramic Arts Network). A five minute video showing Mel Griffin's method of making soft indentations into her freshly thrown plates & bowls to give dimension to the animal paintings she will do later.

<https://youtu.be/WMqVCphMV4?si=AAAgFPZOgjZXYJS3>

This can also be seen at: ceramicartsnetwork.org & then search for Mel Griffin.



29 August
DEMO

Afternoon Throwing Demo with Elaine Wells

– Jane Ostler

We had a very good turnout for this afternoon meeting on 29th August with Elaine Wells.

It was a lovely interactive session, with Elaine going back to basics with throwing / centering and making cylinders. She also gave an explanation and demo of how to throw lids to fit.

She had plenty of helpful hints, e.g. she allows her thrown pots to rest on the bat for at least a couple of hours before wiring off.

This is to reduce trauma to the bottoms and prevent any cracks from forming. If you are using a wheel in a classroom setting you probably won't have that luxury, but if you have your own wheel then you could give it a try.

Elaine also showed us the nice effect that can be achieved by using a curly wire when wiring off the thrown piece.

The time just flew by and it was a very worthwhile session.



Elaine begins a plate demo



Wiring off the plate



Throwing a cylinder



Throwing a bowl



Centering a pot



Elaine throws a lid

30 August
WORKSHOP

Mould Making with Sophie Smith

– Madalyn Baskerville



We had another successful Mould Making day with Sophie in August. Sophie explained how using moulds speeds up the making process, demonstrating that even a simple one-piece mould is much quicker than rolling out slabs, cutting to shape etc.

Each person brought a leather-hard, low-relief tile from home—some to replicate, others to use as sprig or press moulds. In the morning we made one-piece moulds by building a clay wall around each tile and pouring plaster over it (see left). Later, we moved on to making two-piece moulds, mostly using pieces of fruit as models (below right).

Although mould-making can seem complicated, especially when thinking about shapes in reverse, Sophie broke down the steps and made the process easy to understand. Now, we just all need to get casting and making our own moulds at home!



The productive studio

ONE-PIECE MOULDS



TWO-PIECE MOULDS



2025 Annual Exhibition



Last year's opening

By now you should have received the email with the entry information for the exhibition. Drop off, set-up & opening is on Friday 28th November and the exhibition is open to the public on the Saturday and Sunday. Venue: same as last year – Oldham Hall in Great Missenden. See email & attachments for full details.

Please note: Due to this year's exhibition date, the November meeting at Little Kingshill Village hall will be on Friday 21st November – one week earlier than usual this time.

An update from member Pauline Upstone on her lovely Laura Crosland inspired pots

'These are my two best attempts at pots inspired by Laura Crosland. I am still considering various glazes available at the classes I attend to get the lovely effect when the blue and brown glazes run together.'

Pauline Upstone



MEMBERSHIP NEWS

There have been four new members since the last newsletter and two returning members:

New members: Rhian Sturdy, Lisa D'Arcy, Andrea Macleod, Catherine Bendell and Jacque Pavlosky.

Returning members: Sapna Chabba and Dawn Carroll.

A very warm welcome to you all. We look forward to seeing you at the meetings and hope you will all enjoy getting involved in the society.

Rhian and Jacque have written a few words.

Rhian Sturdy

January 2024 saw me leave work and renovate a disused sewage pumping station into my pottery studio. I thought I'd be happy to hand-build, slip and sgraffito my days away but a half day mould making and a Mayco glazing course turned me into a slip caster who loves textured vessels and layering glazes. I make my own moulds and casting slip and 2 pots are never the same. It's the magic of colours from the kiln that I love.



Jacque Pavlosky

I have been an artist most of my life. I practice art in many forms, mainly glass, sculpture and textiles. I'm at Amersham college this term working with ceramics which I enjoy very much, especially studying/making art with other like-minded people.



Jacque's textile sculpture

ANNUAL COMPETITION

This year's theme is:

'WILD THING'
£75 Prize

It's time to get making!

It's fun to see & vote on the entries which are always varied and imaginative!

Bring your piece along to the Christmas party on 21st Nov.
(See Up & Coming Meetings above)



UP AND COMING BUCKS POTTERS MEETINGS

at Little Kingshill Village Hall, HP16 0DZ

Making Session,
'WILD THING'
Competition Vote,
Festive Treats

Christmas Party & Festive Making Session – 8pm, 21st November
Richard Ballantyne and Carol Read will give us a subject and guidance for one of their popular making sessions. This is always a fun evening, including the annual competition vote, mince pies and mulled wine. **Please note the earlier date for this meeting.**

WATCH THIS SPACE

8pm, 30th January and 27th February 2026
The Speakers for these dates are yet to be confirmed. More details to follow by email and on the website.

26 September
WORKSHOP

Enamels & Lustres with Sophie Smith

– Jane Ostler

Our very popular friend of the society Sophie Smith visited us at the end of September to share with us how she uses enamels and lustres to enhance her work.

All of her pieces have enamels or lustres or a combination of these. The meeting was very much a hands on, sharing and participating style of workshop.

Enamels:

These are painted 'on glaze' to highlight different areas on a fired piece, and require a third firing to 800°C for roughly six hours. You cannot put more than one layer on at a time, so one coat = 1 firing. There are many different colours to choose from and they need to be mixed with water from powder or tube to a single cream consistency. By adding a tiny amount of glycerine or enamel flux you can achieve a richer colour.

Lustres: e.g. gold/silver/mother of pearl:

Lustres can be expensive but a little goes a long way. The surface must be clean and grease free, so use acetone or a similar product to prepare the surface. Sophie tends to dilute them with a thinner (Bath potters do a Lustre Thinner) and pours them into a metal pot or spoon to use.

Brushes need to be cleaned with white spirit and take care to wear a mask when applying lustres as the fumes are toxic.

Decals & transfers:

These are also applied 'on glaze'. Decals can be bought ready printed, or you can have your own designs printed. Sophie uses a company called Fotoceramics. The cost is roughly £15 per sheet, from which you can get several decals.

Lustres and decals are usually fired to 747°C. As with lustres, decals & transfers need to be applied to a clean, grease free surface, and 'on glaze'.

They can be food safe, but repeated washing will cause them to fade and none will survive a dishwasher. So it's best to use them on decorative pieces rather than domestic ware.

We had great fun trying each of these methods on some glazed tiles. There are several helpful videos online providing advice on how to use all of the above.



Sophie gave us all personal advice.



A tile from a diligent student!



The handing out of materials



Three examples of Sophie's work

Some inspiring sculptural pieces seen at this year's Royal Academy Summer Exhibition



CTM Potters Supplies – 5% Members Discount

We have agreed a 5% discount for all BPSS members with CTM Potters Supplies.

When ordering you will need to phone and say you are a member of BPSS and give your name. They will then check against the list of names (no contact details) that we have sent.

For Doncaster, Tel: **01709 770801**. For Exeter, Tel: **01395 233077**

CTM Potters Supplies - if you use clay you need CTM

About the society

The Society was formed in 1963 and welcomes all artists working in 3D. Individual membership costs £25; £35 for a family and £10 for full-time students. Membership provides access to monthly demonstrations, several hands-on workshops, and a quarterly newsletter. Members can add their profile and a few images of their work to the Members' Gallery on our website www.buckspotters.com. Our facebook page is 'Bucks pottery and sculpture society' and we are on Instagram as 'buckspotters'.



The Committee

The Committee meets regularly to develop the programme, organise the Annual Exhibition and review costs. If you find a good speaker who could demonstrate to the Society, please tell us. Also, if you have ideas you would like to raise with us, please do so at the monthly meeting or email hlinglis@gmail.com

GDPR information

The information which you provide to us on your membership form will be used solely for the purpose of processing your membership and dealing with you as a member of BPSS. The data will not be shared with any third party for marketing or commercial purposes without obtaining your explicit consent. Our GDPR policy is available to read on the BPSS website.



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