



# mudlark

July 2020

South of the River Potters' Club Newsletter

## COMING EVENTS:

- **SAGGAR FIRING WORKSHOP** *Shabbi Phelps at SORPC Sunday August 9th*
- **EMPTY BOWLS -** *ChristChurch Grammar Sunday August 30th - pots due by August 17th.*  
**Club 1280° firing of bowls: Monday August 12th**
- **Pit Firing - Chris Rogers' place. Deferred**
- **MCAA Awards August 10th - 30th**
- **(Naked) RAKU Firing - Atwell house TBC**
- **Lunch in the Gallery - Wednesday Sept TBC**
- **Glorious Mud - 'FIRE' September 14 - 20**
- **City of Melville ART TRAIL Raku Day Saturday October 10th**
- **Atwell Christmas Bazaar - November 20th onwards**

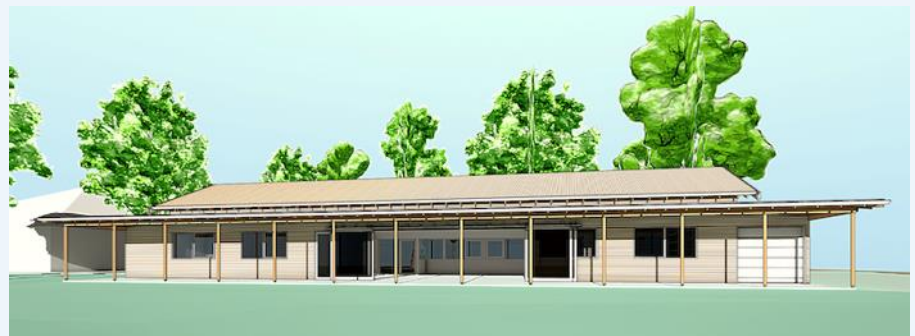
## BONANZA MONTH FOR SORPC

What a month it has been!!!! Firstly we had the delivery of our new kiln which we hoped would eventually be located in a new Club ceramics facility.

And then came the amazing news that the City of Melville Council had voted to fund the new studio to wrap around the new kiln!!

It's wonderful news for the Club and especially for the Development Committee led by Barrie-Anne Morgan who have worked tirelessly for several years to achieve this outcome. Countless letters, draft plans and lobbying of Councillors and the Mayor have all paid off. We had tremendous support and guidance from City of Melville staff who are also 'stoked' at this outcome.

No news yet about when the construction may begin but the next stage will be the preparation of working drawings by the architect. Stay tuned!



### South of the River Potters' Club

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Secretary – Chris Rogers 9453 1401

Treasurer – Peggy Stacy 9331 2507

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## *Empty Bowls Project - IT'S ON*

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The Empty Bowls project is going to take place on Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup> at ChristChurch Grammar School. The organisers have generously offered us a table from which we can promote the Club and sell pots. We are committed to providing at least 50 pots but let's aim for more than that, especially now that we have a huge new kiln to fire them in.

So there's still heaps of time to get your bowls made and if they aren't used this year, they will certainly be a great start for next year's event.

Remember that the soup bowls should be of a generous size (suggested 14-16cm wide x 6-8cm deep) and, of course, food safe. Our goal is for the South of the River potters to contribute at least **50** bowls!

Our contact person for the project is Geff Gomez  
[geffandjeannie@gmail.com](mailto:geffandjeannie@gmail.com)

Pots are required by August 17<sup>th</sup> and can be left in the Club work shed. A Club sponsored glaze firing (1280°) will be held on Wednesday August 12<sup>th</sup>. Members can use Club glazes (we hope to have two stoneware glazes available\*). Please glaze pots by Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup> and leave them to dry on the shelf in the kiln shed.

\*(Several test batches of Club glazes were made up several weeks ago. If you have tried these glazes, please contact Chris Rogers to let her know your opinions of the glazes so that she can decide which ones to produce in greater quantities.)

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## *Saggar Firing workshop* *Shabbi Phelps - SUNDAY AUGUST 9<sup>th</sup>*

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Great news!! The saggar firing workshop with Shabbi Phelps will be going ahead after being delayed by the lockdown.



On Sunday, August 9<sup>th</sup> Shabbi Phelps will present a workshop demonstrating her technique of saggar firing

using aluminium foil saggars in a raku kiln. Shabbi is renowned for her beautiful and distinctive hand built pots, many of them fired using this technique which produces wonderful warm and varied colourations.



Members can attend to view and learn about the firing process and may also bring pots to be included in the firings. Places will be limited for pots with a maximum of two pots per participant (bring an extra one or two in case the firings go more quickly than anticipated). The pots should be about 15-20cm high and made of raku-suitable clay with a smooth, preferably burnished, surface. Bring along materials for inclusion such as dried, salt soaked string, dry seaweed or banana peels, copper wire, etc.

The fee for the workshop will be \$25. (\$35 if you wish include pots in the firing.)

The workshop will run from 10.30am-2.30pm in the area near the Club workshed.

Contact Clive Eger ASAP by email to register your intention to attend and mention whether you will be bringing pots for firing. [clivesmail71@gmail.com](mailto:clivesmail71@gmail.com)

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## *Kiln*

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The new kiln arrived a couple of weeks ago and the delivery was eagerly supervised by a number of members. The kiln was purchased with the assistance of a grant from the Dept. of Industry, Innovations & Science through the office of local MP, Ben Morton. Thanks to all involved, especially Chris Rogers for dealing with all of the paperwork involved!

Sandy and Graham have programmed the kiln and it is ready for bookings. It is considerably larger than our other kilns so it will take a lot of work to fill it but it will be a most useful asset as we move into the second half of the year with several workshops, Empty Bowls, MCAA Art Awards, 'Glorious Mud' and the Christmas bazaar coming up very quickly.

To allow us to monitor the performance of the kiln, members doing glaze firings are asked to include four

cone packs in each firing and photograph the cones at the end of the firing.



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## *Kiln Firing Procedures by Eve Gellatly*

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### NOTES ON LOADING A KILN FOR A STONEWARE FIRING

Eve Gellatly

A kiln is a very special and very expensive piece of equipment. It is designed to be fired up to very high temperatures, so the correct kiln elements and furniture need to be in place. It should be well insulated and have bungs which are left out at the beginning of the firing, and put in later after most of the fumes have cleared from the kiln. For a bisc firing the bungs are put in not before 600 degrees Celsius, and for a glost firing they should be put in at about 800 degrees.

The kiln has shelves which do not slide in like an oven, but are supported on props which come in various sizes, and small blocks are sometimes used to give additional height to a prop. They are simply kiln shelves that have been cut up. The shelves must be small enough to allow hot air to circulate well and are usually 1.5 cm thick. Thinner ones may be used when firing to lower temperatures. The bottom shelf should be raised on blocks to allow air circulation, otherwise there will be a very thick hot mass at the bottom of the kiln, and pots standing on this are likely to crack as their top part will cool faster than the base. The shelves should be painted with kiln wash, which will need to be replaced now and then. It is there to prevent glaze drips from sticking to the shelf, but all pots should be fired on small batts which are made from fireclay and should also be painted with kiln wash.

Three props are used to hold up each shelf. On each shelf the props must be exactly above the one below to take the weight of the shelves plus pots. Place one prop at the centre of the back about 1.5 cm in from the edge, or about a finger width, and one at each front corner, also in from the edges. Hold the shelf carefully by the edges and lower it on to the props. Lift the shelf slightly and lower it again, making sure it does not wobble.

Make sure all pots have been well cleaned of glaze on the bottom and slightly up the sides. The pots should not touch each other as they will stick together even if they are unglazed. There is a slight melting at high temperatures, and also an increase in height which all have to be taken into account when loading.

Remember to leave the spaces for the props when loading the pots. Never slide the pots on the shelves when loading - the whole assembly could collapse! Load the rest of the shelves and pots making sure that they do not touch the pyrometer, which is a delicate

probe which measures the temperature and sends the information to the controller. Sometimes it is in the door so it is not in the way, but more often it is in the side. Make sure all the props are in position before lowering a shelf onto them, and make sure the shelf is leaving a space above the pots. Leave a space in front of the spyhole [bunghole] so that you will be able to see the firing cones. (See notes on making cone pat at the end.)

To fire to stoneware use cones 8, 9 and 10. 8 is the warning cone, 9 is the firing cone, and 10 is the guard cone. When getting reasonably close to the firing temperature cone 8 starts to bend to the left. When checking, wear welders' goggles and a leather glove. Remove the bung and have a quick look. Put it back. You need to check every few minutes but there is no great rush. When cone 8 is right down, cone 9 will start to move. When it is right down, or whenever you choose, switch off. One talks about cones being at 10 o'clock, 9 o'clock etc. You have to get to know your kiln to know which is the best firing temperature for your glazes. Some glazes, such as clear glazes, like to be fired higher than others. Of course if you are happy just to let it run to the end of the programme you can, but remember that firing your pots is part of being a potter, and the choice is yours.

Switch the kiln off when firing temperature has been reached, and remember that the cooling cycle is just as important as the firing cycle. It takes a long time. It should be ready two days later. To check the temperature before opening the kiln, switch on the power and press TEMP. Switch off again. If under 100 degrees, remove the bungs. Remember that a rush of cold air can crack the pots. You can open the door slightly [cracking the kiln], then leave it for a short time. Empty the kiln carefully, using gloves if necessary. Stack the shelves carefully on their edges, put props and bats away neatly. Then admire your pots, or assess what went wrong. An absolutely perfect pot is rare!

## FIRING CONES

It is always a good idea to include cones in the firing, even if you are using a kiln controller. The cones will provide a record of the temperature reached during the firing and can give valuable information if the firing results are not as you expected. Firing cones are placed in a support made from a rolled mixture of fireclay and water which is formed into a sausage. Double over the sausage to form a long U-shape. Place cone 8 in first at the left. The cone should be flat on its base, the number towards you, and it will lean slightly to the left so that it doesn't interfere with the next cone as it falls. Bring the rolled clay together to hold it in place, then put cone 9 in next, enclose it, then do the same with cone 10. Lift the cone pat onto a small block, and put small holes all over the wet clay, to let the steam out. Use a matchstick or a satay stick to make the holes. The block may have to be raised on props so that it is at the correct level to be seen

through the spyhole. To check that all cones can be seen, either put a tealight candle beside the cones, or use a small torch inside the kiln. Shut the door and check. Adjust if necessary. Remove the light from inside the kiln.



Editor's note: It is always a good idea to include cones in the firing, even if you are using a kiln controller. The cones will provide a record of the temperature reached during the firing and can give valuable information if the firing results are not as you expected. This is why some people call them 'witness cones'. The cone support can also be made re-usable if the holes for the cones are enlarged but still snug enough to hold the cone in place (allow for shrinkage!). If you are using the cones to monitor the firing by observation through the spyhole, it is useful to paint a stripe of iron oxide on each one to make them more visible in the firing.



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## 'GLORIOUS MUD'

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The biennial South of the River Potters' Club selective exhibition 'Glorious Mud' is on again this year in the Atwell Gallery from September 13<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup>. The theme for 'Glorious Mud' this year is 'FIRE'. This is the only event where our Club takes over the entire gallery for an exclusive showing of our work and so it is a great opportunity for members to take the spotlight and make some sales along the way. So, get your best pots ready and let's make this the biggest and best 'Glorious Mud' so far.

We will be taking photos of pots that are going to be in the exhibition to include in our promotional materials for the exhibition and a call out will happen soon when we fix a date for the photos to be taken.

September will be here very soon so it's time to begin preparations now. Don't be shy if you haven't exhibited before - the glory of this exhibition is the diversity of styles of ceramics that are on show every time.

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### *MCAA Art Awards*

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The MCAA Art Awards is a great annual showcase for us and in recent years we have had an increasing presence in an exhibition that used to be dominated by 2D art. And the MCAA love having our work in their exhibitions. The approval of our new studio is even more reason for us to 'strut our stuff' in this very well attended event - many Melville councillors regularly attend the opening night so let's show them that they have made a very good decision.

The exhibition opens on August 10<sup>th</sup> which means that the exhibits should be delivered between 9 - 10.30AM on Monday, August 10<sup>th</sup> and unsold pots are to be collected after 3.30 on Sunday, August 30<sup>th</sup>.

Details and entry forms are on the Atwell Gallery website:  
<https://www.atwellarts.com/mcaa--exhibitor-information.html>

Closing date for entries: 4pm Thursday, August 6<sup>th</sup>

#### **Next meeting:**

**The next meeting will be held on  
Wednesday, August 13<sup>th</sup> in Room 2/3 at  
Atwell House at 10.00am**