

Bethlehem Pottery Club – Let's Get Started!

Kia ora and welcome! It's great to have you with us. We hope this guide will help you find your feet and understand how our club works. It's divided into two sections – 'Club Operations' and 'How To'. Keep it handy so you can refer back when you need to. We're a busy club and, if you're new to clay, there's a lot to learn. So take your time and feel free to ask questions – we're very happy to help every step of the way.

How we began:

In the 1960s pottery was well underway in Tauranga and several full-time potters lived locally. In 1965 a group of potting enthusiasts met regularly at the art room of the newly established Otumoetai College and formed the Tauranga Pottery Club. Membership soon reached 50. By the mid-70s when pottery was popular and evening classes were constantly full, two friends began a pottery group at Bethlehem Primary School in 1975, borrowing films from the National Library to increase their knowledge and hone skills. The Bethlehem Pottery Club became an incorporated society in 1979, and by 1980 was able to lease Bethlehem Primary School's old schoolmaster's house in Carmichael Road. After many years of fundraising and working bees, the current purpose-built studio on Bethlehem Rd was complete and in February 1991 the club moved in. The building was officially opened in September that year.

We are hugely grateful to our founding members and everyone who has helped build the club over the years. As a result of their significant time, effort, determination and tireless fundraising, we now have the use of excellent clubrooms and an extensive range of equipment.

We hope you will take pride in being a member of Bethlehem Pottery Club and respectfully make use of our resources for your creative masterpieces.

Club Operations

Safety info:

You are welcome to work at the studio in your own time. Please use the diary to sign in for security purposes and so we know how many members are using the studio.

For your own safety, please ensure the doors are locked when you are working at the studio during the evening.

If you are the last person to leave, please check the following:

- Lights off
- All doors locked
- Heat pump/air con off
- Wheels cleaned and turned off
- Hair dryers off and put away

- Dishes washed and your work area has been cleaned with a wet cloth
- Floor mopped, especially if you are using the wheel
- Check the 'open' flag is back inside

Please regularly check the hazards board to see up-to-date information on any health and safety issues.

In the case of fire, please leave the building immediately. Only use the fire extinguisher, located on the wall by the front door, if you have been trained to do so.

Sanding your pots – clay dust is not good for our lungs so if you want to sand down your bisque-fired pots, please do so outside or at home, and ensure you use a face mask. We try to keep our studio dust free, and when dusting, always use a wet cloth.

Club equipment:

Bats and boards – small bats and boards for larger projects are available for use, but please do not remove them from the studio.

Clay extruder – this is a fast way to make coils for hand-made pots. You'll also find a roll of clear plastic on the back porch for rolling around your clay before placing the clay into the extruder. This makes for an easy clean up. Please ask how to operate this before using.

Foam pieces – these are useful for supporting large artworks, and are found on the back porch.

Glaze – various glazes are available for members to use. Please see separate section on glazing.

Hair dryers – these are very useful when you need to speed up the drying process. Please remember to turn off when finished, and put away once cool.

Kilns – we have four kilns at the studio (three electric and one gas), and a portable raku kiln. The club holds raku glazing days every now and then. We also have a small test kiln at the studio which is useful for testing glazes or firing small pieces. All members are able to hire the test kiln and the 4cu kiln for their own work following a training session from a kiln technician.

Kiln technicians – we have a dedicated team who pack and unpack the kilns for club members. If you're keen to learn to fire the kilns, please talk to a committee member.

Plaster moulds – we have an extensive selection of plaster moulds and hump moulds. They are for use at the studio only, so please do not take them home. Remember to clean when finished, and do not use sharp objects which could damage the plaster.

Slab Roller – this is located on the back porch. Please use pieces of fabric (hanging on the line) on either side of your clay when using the roller. Wash and hang the fabric to dry when finished. Cover after using with plastic sheet.

Spray Booth – a spray booth and spray gun are available for members to use. An easy-to-follow instruction book is included with the gun, otherwise please ask someone for assistance if you're unsure what to do. All equipment must be thoroughly cleaned afterwards. Spray glazes produce an even finish to your work and can create interesting effects.

Tools – we encourage you to purchase your own basic set as soon as possible. Additional tools for club use can be found in the trolley beside the front door. Please clean before putting them away. Many useful tools can be made at home from everyday items.

Wedging slab – our plaster wedging slab is the place to prepare your clay before you begin your project. Please avoid using any sharp objects on it!

Wheels – wheels are available for members to use and wheel classes are available throughout the year.

Housekeeping:

We employ a cleaner to clean the floor, bathroom and kitchen weekly, however your help in keeping workspaces clean and tidy is appreciated. If you have the time, consider taking the laundry home to wash, wiping and sorting the wooden bats and boards, tidying the plaster moulds, or even hosing down the outside of the windows. If you think it needs doing, please do it – the studio is a shared space and all help is appreciated. A jobs list is displayed in the club.

Tea and coffee is supplied free of charge for you to help yourself. Please wash up afterwards.

Fees:

We are a not-for-profit club and most committee members are volunteers. All subscriptions and firing charges go towards the operational costs of running our club, including utilities, rubbish collection, cleaning, property maintenance, as well as the capital costs of replacing kilns and other equipment.

Committee:

Our committee is elected at our mid-year AGM. As well as financial and operational management, the committee is responsible for planning and initiating key projects during the year, organising exhibitions and guest workshops, compiling the club newsletter, maintenance, glaze room management, co-ordinating clay purchases and glaze room stock, and managing the gallery.

Helping out/volunteering:

Help is always needed so please sign out if you can lend a hand. Here are some of the ways you can assist:

- General property maintenance eg, keeping front gardens tidy, cleaning windows, wet dusting all surfaces

- Exhibition sub committee
- Assisting with classes
- Assisting with kiln packing
- Website management

Gallery:

We are very proud of our fabulous gallery where members can sell their work. The gallery is open whenever the 'open' flag is flying. The club takes a 25% +gst commission on sales. If your work is of good quality and you would like to exhibit, please place your piece on the 'gallery' shelf, which is located in the main work area.

Classes:

Interest in our classes is increasing every year and we always have waiting lists. We currently run introductory handbuilding classes for adults, and an introductory wheel class. We also run private workshops for hens' parties and team-building sessions. We are always looking for people to assist in running classes. You don't need too much knowledge – what's important is a willingness to help and teach some simple techniques.

Exhibitions:

Our club is a regular participant of the Garden and Art Fest, held every two years. We also exhibit and sell alongside the Tauranga Society of Artists during their art expos. Various clubs in the region hold exhibitions throughout the year, and we encourage our members to enter their work in these.

Workshops:

Our committee organises weekend workshops during the year, as well as raku firing days. We encourage members with specific skill sets to share their expertise with our other members, whether it be firing methods, sculpture, glaze methods, or throwing or hand building techniques, in the form of mini workshops.

Library:

We have an extensive selection of books and magazines for members to loan. Please record your name and details on the 'sign out/sign in' sheet/clipboard, which is hanging from the library bookcase. Please do not remove books from the library's reference section – these are for reading in the studio only.

'How To'

Payments:

Payments to the club must be made via internet banking. Our account number is:

- 03-0435-0459312-000

All member costs, from annual subs to clay sales and glaze charges, are entered into our accounting system. Monthly account statements are emailed to our members along with payment instructions.

We have EFTPOS at the club where payments can be made. Any clay or gallery sales to be entered onto the day sale sheet.

Clay, Firing and Glaze Recording and Payments

1. Clay Purchasing

To avoid losses sustained through missing and unpaid-for clay, all clay purchasing must be done through a committee member or dedicated 'clay monitor'. The people to contact are listed on the whiteboard by the front door, however we encourage members to post clay enquiries on the Bethlehem Pottery Housekeeping Facebook page, as it is easier for the clay team to organise.

2. Firing

A slip must be filled out whenever you want a piece bisque or glaze fired. These are found hanging in the glaze room. Please complete **all** fields on the slip, including full name and potter's mark. When firing is completed, the charges are written onto the slip and placed on the appropriate shelves with your work.

3. Glaze Book

This is a dedicated charging book for you to record the purchase of glazes, stains, oxides, underglazes and raw ingredients. If you are using a club glaze, use the chart in the glaze room to determine the size of your pot and the corresponding cost of the glaze. Costs for all other glazing ingredients are shown on the individual containers. Record each cost into the glaze book. If in doubt, ask.

Clay:

We have a range of clays for members to buy, whether you are hand-building or wheel throwing. They range in colour, texture, and firing temperatures depending on what you're looking for. Please follow the process above for purchasing clay.

Glazing and Underglazing:

Glazing is an artwork in itself, as well as a science. When you're ready to glaze we suggest you talk to an experienced member who can guide you on glaze options, application etc. We regularly hold glazing workshops.

There are three main ways to glaze: dipping, brushing and spraying.

Dipping – good for larger pieces and domestic ware. You dip (or pour) your piece in a bucket of glaze and it's done.

Brushing – the way to go if you want to 'paint' with the glaze, and/or you are using several glazes on your piece. Many pre-made glazes come in small containers so brushing is very easy. Often 2-3 coats of glaze are needed for each piece.

Spraying – generally used to create a more consistent finish, or special spray effects.

Underglazing is another effective technique and is the best way to create more precise colour work. Underglazes, and slip, are painted onto greenware before the piece is bisque-fired. Once bisqued, a translucent glaze can be painted over the top and fired to create a glossy or satin finish.

Stain is coloured dry powder that can be added to water, glaze or slip to create a different style or decorative look.

Once you know a bit more about the glaze you want, it's best if you buy (or make) your own, however white and clear dipping glaze, and a range of other colours, are always available for members to purchase.

With training, you can experiment with making your own glazes. Be patient, there is a lot to learn!

Firing:

Greenware – before your piece is fired, it is called greenware. Greenware needs to be completely dry before heading to the kiln, so place on the 'Drying Shelves' in the glaze room. These shelves are also used for pieces that are still being worked on – plastic wrap helps prevent the piece from drying out while you are working on it. We have limited room on these shelves, so please remove your pieces as soon as you can. The greenware stage is also the time to apply slip and underglaze.

Remember to include your 'potter's mark' on your piece. This is standard practice and also helps the kiln technicians identify your work. Add your mark and your name to the list in the glaze room.

Bisque – once dry, place your piece on the bisque firing shelf in the glaze room. Most ceramic work requires two firings. The first firing, or bisque, is a lower temperature than the glaze firing and changes the greenware to a more durable but porous stage so it can be handled easily during glazing. It also provides a porous body to soak up the glaze.

Glaze firing – you can glaze your pot as soon as it is bisque-fired. You must leave a 'dry foot' (ie, free from any glaze) on the base of your piece otherwise glaze will stick like concrete to the kiln shelf. If that happens, you may be charged a \$25 fee to cover the shelf maintenance costs, or \$180 to replace the shelf. Cookies that have been kiln-washed are available to use under pieces that have a risk of running.

Brush-on wax

is freely available for members to use. Apply it to the base of pots when dipping/spraying to avoid having to wipe off glaze afterwards. The wax comes off during firing.

Place your glazed pots on the appropriate glazing shelf depending on what temperature you want your pot fired (see cone settings below).

Temperature and cones:

During a glaze firing, there are two different measurements of heat – pyrometer and cones. The kiln's pyrometer measures the temperature of the air in the kiln, and communicates with the digital kiln controller. The cones gauge the heat work in the clay body of the pieces, and are formulated to bend over at a particular temperature.

Heat work describes the heat of the clay along with the glaze. All glaze is formulated to mature at a particular temperature or range of temperatures.

A good firing is when the pyrometric temperature and the cone temperature matches. This should happen most of the time in an electric kiln that has been programmed well. The kiln technician can see the cones through the bung hole during the firing, and watch at what temperature they actually bend over.

The Orton Cone Chart is located on the door between the glaze and kiln rooms.

Our club bisque fires at 950°C (cone 08) and has programmed kiln firings for the following temperatures:

1000°C (cone 06)

1060°C (cone 05)

1100°C (cone 03)

1160°C (cone 3)

1200°C (cone 5)

1220°C (cone 6)

Please include temperature and cone setting when filling in your firing slip. It is all too easy to write cone 6 on the slip and then mistakenly place on the 06 shelf. Give as much info as possible to the firing team.

Clay and glaze matching:

All clay is formulated to vitrify within a particular range and this is written on the bag – if in doubt, ask. Please be aware of this firing range as the type of glaze you choose should be formulated to mature within this range as well. Note that many of the modern clays only fire to 1200°C (cone 5).

Even if you think you have done everything right, glazing is fickle and finished pieces still may not turn out quite the way you expected. It pays to test your glaze on a small piece before using it on your prized artwork. The test kiln is useful for this – book this kiln by filling out the book hanging in the kiln room.

Where to buy tools and glazes:

Te Puke Ceramics – for an extensive range of brush-on Duncan underglazes and glazes. Call to make a time to visit. You can view the Duncan catalogue in advance at www.duncanceramics.com

www.tepukeceramics.co.nz

Botpots – for clay, glazes, tools, wheels etc

www.botpots.co.nz

Waikato Ceramics – for clay, glazes, equipment etc

www.potterssupplies.co.nz

Decopots – for clay, glazes etc

www.decopot.co.nz

CCG – For glazes, raw glaze ingredients, tools, wheels etc

www.ccg.co.nz

Wellington Pottery Supplies - clay, glazes, tools, etc

www.wellingtonpotterssupplies.co.nz