**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.

Bethlehem Pottery Club is a volunteer organisation and couldn't operate without the time and effort that our members willingly put in to make the club run smoothly. We welcome everyone’s contribution – from taking the aprons home to wash, mopping the floors or joining the committee or a sub-group, every little bit helps enormously. And when using the studio and equipment, please remember to keep the space clean and tidy and looking wonderful.

**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 you 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, including Gallery
* Heat pump/air con off
* Wheels cleaned and turned off
* Heat guns off and put away
* Dishes washed and your work area clean and tidy
* Floor mopped, especially if you are using the wheel
* Check the ‘open flag’ is back inside

Fire extinguisher – this is located under the noticeboard by the studio sliding door.

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.

**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.

**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.

**Heat Guns** – these are very useful when you need to speed up the drying process. Please remember to turn off when finished, and take care when using because they get very hot. Please do not place them on the plastic trays of the wheels.

**Kilns** – we have three kilns at the studio (two electric and one gas), a wood-fired kiln off site and a portable raku kiln. The club regularly holds raku glazing days. 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 use this test kiln once you’ve had 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.

**Spray Booth** – a spray booth and compressor are available for members to use, however you will need to bring your own spray gun and equipment, and also have training on how to use the compressor. Spray glazes produce an even finish to your work and can create interesting effects.

**Tools** – while some tools are available for members to use, we encourage you to purchase your own as soon as possible. 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 your begin your project. Please avoid using any sharp objects on it!

**Wheels** – eight 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 fortnightly, however your help in keeping workspaces clean and tidy is appreciated. If you have the time, we are always looking for help with 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.

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 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.

Annual club subscription: $60

One-off joining fee: $50

**Committee:**

Our committee is elected at our AGM in July. As well as financial and operational management, the committee is responsible for planning and initiating key projects during the year, organising annual 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 sing 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, dusting in the gallery
* Exhibition sub committee
* Assisting with classes
* Assisting with kiln packing

**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% 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 and Intermediate handbuilding classes for adults, and an introductory class for children. We also run a monthly class for residents at the Bob Owens Retirement Village on the first Monday morning of the month. We are always looking for people to assist in running these classes. You don’t need too much knowledge – what’s important is a willingness to help and teach some simple techniques.

**Exhibitions:**

We run our prestigious annual exhibition, BayClay, in November at Baycourt. Members are encouraged to submit pieces for selection. At least one other exhibition is held during the year, and members are also able to submit pieces to regional and national exhibitions organised by other clubs.

**Workshops:**

Our committee organises weekend workshops during the year, as well as raku firing days. Every year the guest potter at BayClay – who is also the selector and judge – is invited to run a weekend workshop, and these are always very popular.

**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:**

There are two methods to make payments to the club:

* Via internet banking
  + 03-0435-0459312-000
  + 03-0435-0459312-001 (for Gallery purchases)
* Via cash or cheque.

All cash/cheque payments must include a payment slip. This records your name, date, reason for payment (ie, subs, clay, glaze etc.) and cost, making it easier for the Treasurer to reconcile accounts. Place the payment slip into an envelope with the cash or cheque and ‘post’ into the safe box on the wall in the glaze room.

If you are paying by internet banking there is no need for a payment slip, however please be specific with your online referencing. For example, reference as ‘clay, WS bag 10’, ‘firing’, ‘account’, ‘subs’, ‘workshop’, as appropriate. Please also split your transactions if you are paying for multiple things eg, $21 clay WS bag 23 (one transaction), $50 account (one transaction). If your referencing needs further clarification then a payment slip can be added to the cash box.

**Accounts and Record Books – all stored in the Glaze Room:**

1. Accounts Book

To avoid having to make lots of small payments, the club runs an account system for members and transactions are recorded in the accounts book. You can make a lump sum payment, say $50, into your account and the firing team will deduct fees each time one of your pieces is fired, and for any club glaze used. Please keep an eye on your account and remember to top up as required. If you do not want to operate on the credit book system then please pay for items at the time of use and fill in both the relevant book (clay book or glaze book) and a white slip.

1. Clay Book

When purchasing clay, please record the type, bag number, quantity and method of payment into this book. Clay must be paid for immediately; it cannot be charged to your account.

1. Firing Book

When firing is completed, the charges are written up into the firing book by the kiln technicians. The treasurer then transfers charges to each member’s account in the accounts book.

1. Glaze Book

This is a dedicated charging book for you to record the purchase of stains, oxides and raw ingredients, glazes and underglazes. All ingredients are priced. If you are using dipping glaze, use the chart in the glaze room to determine the size of your pot and the corresponding cost of the glaze. Record the amount used in the glaze book. The treasurer then transfers charges to your account.

**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. We also regularly try new clays, so keep an eye out for bags on the back porch. New product information is also advertised through the newsletter.

The club does not profit from the sale of clay to members, however we do need to keep track of it. Please follow the process, as 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.

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

**Dipping** – good for larger pieces and domestic ware. You dip 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 very popular 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 finish.

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

The club’s glaze room is evolving so watch this space! 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 is always available for members to purchase. We also have a spray booth and compressor, however members need to bring their own spray gun and equipment. A small compressor is also available for airbrushing underglaze.

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. 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’ on the base of your piece otherwise glaze will stick like concrete to the kiln shelf, so you must clean off any glaze on the bottom of your pot. There is brush-on wax available in the glaze room which is useful when dipping pots and is freely available for members to use. 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 – three of which are placed into the kiln for each glaze firing – gauge the heat work in the clay body of the pieces, and are formulated to bend over at a particular temperature – from 560°c (cone 022) to 1386°c (cone 14).

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 in the kiln room on the left wall.

**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.

Many of the modern clays only fire to 1200°c (cone 5). When you use these clays please leave a note for the technician because, if over fired, they may become brittle, or bloat.

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

1000°c (cone 06)

1060°c (cone 04)

1100°c (cone 03)

1160°c (cone 3)

1200°c (cone 5)

1220°c (cone 6)

You can refer to kiln settings in temperature alone – you do not have to know the cones!

Even if you think you have it right, 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.

**Glazed work:**

Place your finished piece on the appropriate firing shelves in the glaze room to correspond with your required cone setting. Place a piece of paper (firing slip) under your piece with your name, the cone setting and whether or not you have used your own glaze.

**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

Tel: 07 575 5037, mob: 027 289 3520, www.tepukeceramics.co.nz

**Botpots** – for clay, glazes, tools, kilns etc

Tel: 09 271 2626, wwwbotpots.co.nz

**Waikato Ceramics** – for clay, glazes, equipment etc

Tel: 07 856 8890, www potterysupplies.co.nz

**Decopots** – for clay, glazes etc

Tel: 0800 667229, www.decopot.co.nz

**CCG** – For glazes, tools, wheels etc

Tel: 09 475 5224, www.ccg.co.nz