



# 50



# years of clay

**Celebrating 50 years of  
New Plymouth Potters**

**Taranaki Research Centre Te Pua  
Wānanga o Taranaki, Puke Ariki**

**April 2023 – June 2024**

**— Puke Ariki —**



**NPDC**



# President's Welcome

Welcome to *50 Years of Clay*, New Plymouth Potters 50th anniversary exhibition curated by the staff of Puke Ariki.

I will start by thanking Jan Pidwell. Jan is a long-serving member of our club who kindly responded to my plea to help with this project. She has made an excellent effort in collaborating with Puke Ariki staff over several months to help bring it to fruition. Thanks must also go to our club's patron, Keith Bland, whose support for the club has been invaluable over many years. The exhibition would not have been possible without Keith's generous offer to loan his collection of exhibition-winning pots to the museum. Thanks also to the

staff of Puke Ariki for liaising with us and curating this exhibition.

It has been most heartening to have Puke Ariki stage this event to celebrate a significant milestone in the life of New Plymouth Potters. It celebrates not only the winners of our 50 annual exhibitions, but members past and present who have all contributed to the success of a club which seeks to encourage people to express their creativity and skill in ceramic art.

*Rick Wood*

*President*

*New Plymouth Potters Club Incorporated*



# 50 Years of Clay

New Plymouth Potters began in 1968 and was incorporated in 1972. In 1973 they obtained the lease of the historic Te Henui Vicarage from the New Plymouth City Council and the new workroom, built by the club on the same grounds, was officially opened.

Fifty years have passed and New Plymouth Potters is still a thriving club serving its members and the New Plymouth public. At present the New Plymouth Potters have an active committee of 8-10 members.

The historic Vicarage serves as a display and sales centre for the products of its members. It is open to the public from 1pm-4pm on weekends. The workroom contains equipment, a library, work space, wheels and kilns for members to use 24 hours a day, 7 days per week.

The New Plymouth Potters members wish to express their appreciation to the TSB Community Trust/Toi Foundation for grants which have assisted the club over the last 50 years.

The club runs classes to introduce members of the public to working with clay and holds an annual exhibition of members' work. The exhibition is selected and judged by recognised New Zealand potters. The first annual exhibition was held in 1973.

In 1989 the then Taranaki Museum pledged to purchase the winning pot from each annual exhibition. Puke Ariki purchased the last pot in 2003, Joyce Young's *Pair of Blue Ducks on Rock*. These pots form part of this exhibition.

In 2004 a long-time collector of pottery offered an on-going cash prize for the winning pot of each year's exhibition. These pieces have been generously lent to Puke Ariki to complete the exhibition.

For more information about the New Plymouth Potters visit their website: [www.newplymouthpotters.blogspot.com](http://www.newplymouthpotters.blogspot.com)



# Exhibition Locations

**L1**

**Museum**

*Use the key to find the locations of the exhibition within Puke Ariki.*

There are cases located in the museum foyer and the Taranaki Research Centre/Te Pua Wānanga o Taranaki.

**Taranaki Life Gallery**

**Puke Ariki Store**

Ariki Street

**Library Collection**

**Library**



Entrance



Toilet



Changing Room



iSITE



Accessible Toilet

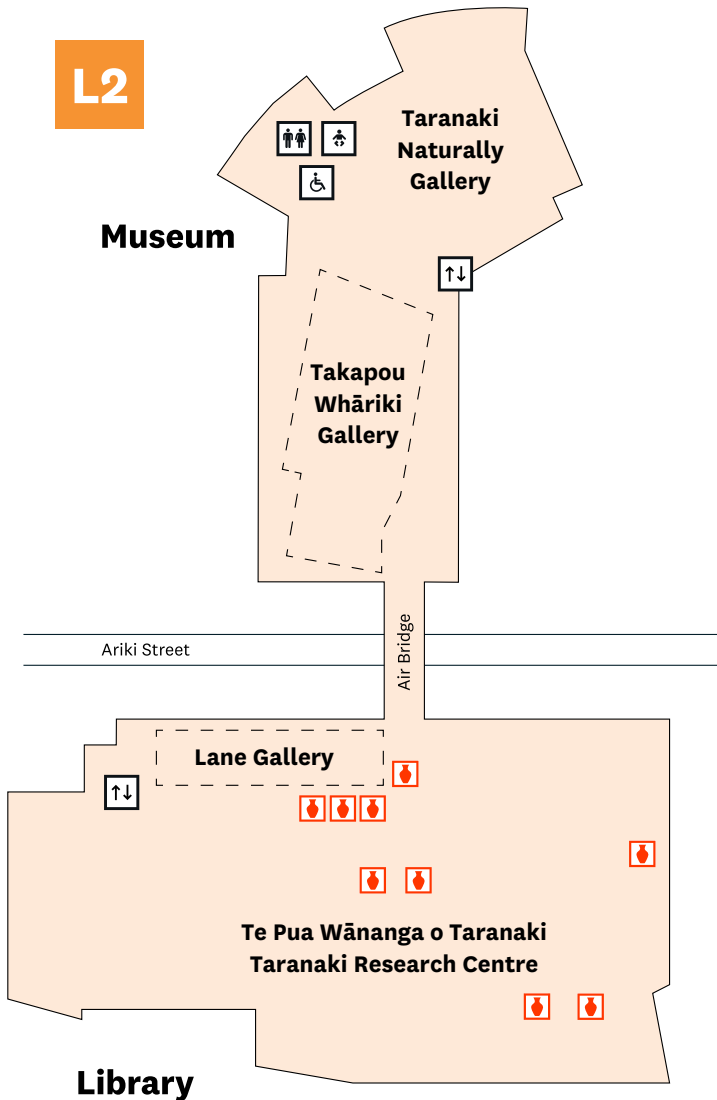


Lift



50 Years of Clay Exhibition

**L2**



Entrance



Toilet



Changing Room



iSITE



Accessible Toilet



Lift



50 Years of Clay Exhibition

# New Plymouth Potters

**1968**

New Plymouth Potters began operation.

**1972**

New Plymouth Potters leased Te Henui Vicarage and became New Plymouth Potters Incorporated.

**1973**

The New Plymouth Potters started building a workshop at the back of the section on which Te Henui Vicarage stands. New Plymouth City Council loaned \$1500, the Queen Elizabeth Arts Council \$500, TSB \$500 and the club raised \$1000 towards the cost of the building. Later that year The first kiln was installed in the New Plymouth Potters studio.

Historic Places Trust passed the restored Te Henui Vicarage to the New Plymouth City Council who then passed the building onto the potter's to use. New Plymouth Potters held its first exhibition in Radio Taranaki's New Plymouth studios.

**1974**

The first glaze firing was held at the studio.

**1991**

Graham Mulvay designed a series of tiles which depicted the history of the Puke Ariki site from the arrival of the Māori to its development as a public park. This work was presented to the New Plymouth District Council to mark the 150th celebration and displayed at Puke Ariki. In 2004, the tiles were re-positioned under the Nikau trees on the Puke Ariki Landing.

**2000**

After the Taranaki Polytechnic ceased public pottery classes the club commenced public classes. This was to encourage new members to join the club.

The first annual exhibition was no longer held in the Taranaki Museum, however the selector's choice was still presented to the Museum, the last one being in 2003. Annual exhibitions have been presented in empty shops on Devon Street for some years and then in the Real Tart Gallery until its closure.

To celebrate the millennium, Graham Mulvay and club members designed and made a series of tiles to form a mural, depicting Taranaki *From the Mountain to the Sea*, which is displayed at the clubrooms.



## **2001**

Marjan Harding led the extension to the existing clubrooms to better facilitate the public classes. A separate kiln room was included as well as an area for pottery wheels. Marjan also managed the paving of the backyard, building the storage shed, painting the workroom, introduction of the computerised kiln firing, was treasurer for years, set up with Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki and tutored the first public pottery classes. She passed away in 2014.

## **2002**

Te Henui Vicarage was upgraded, with new shingle tiles for the roof, the interior painted, the interior timber joists cleaned and new lighting added.

## **2004**

The Ceramics New Zealand national conference and exhibition was held in New Plymouth. New Plymouth Potters assisted the national organisation with this, including new plinths being made for the exhibition, organised by Barbara Nicholls. These plinths are still being used today.

## **2008**

New Plymouth Potters became a charitable entity.

## **2009**

A brick soda kiln was built behind the workrooms.

## **2014**

Six new Shimpo wheels were purchased for the club.

## **2015**

Real Tart Gallery closed. Annual exhibitions started at J.D. Reid's gallery (now the Art Loft) and continues today.

## **2019**

A new 12.5 cubic foot electric kiln replaced the worn out 10 cubic foot.

## **2023**

New Plymouth Potters celebrate 50 years.



# Supreme Award Winners



***Ancient basket (1989)***

Gaye Atkinson

raku fired raku clay

Collection of Puke Ariki



***Flower vase (1990)***

Ruth Goodwin

pit fired stoneware

Collection of Puke Ariki



***Safari (1991)***

Sue Spannagl

electric fired earthenware

Collection of Puke Ariki





***Pohutukawa coast (1992)***

Bev Rea

salt fired, wood fired

stoneware

Collection of Puke Ariki



***Seascape (1993)***

Margaret Edwards

electric fired stoneware

with crystalline glaze

Collection of Puke Ariki



***Diamonds (1994)***

Sue Spannagl

electric fired earthenware

Collection of Puke Ariki



***Vase (1995)***  
Pat Robertson  
gas fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Blue strata II (1996)***  
Trish Kane  
gas fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Blue kettle (1997)***  
Margaret Foley  
salt fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Surfers (1998)***  
Patricia Close  
electric fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Ancient vessel (1999)***  
Trish Kane  
raku fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Teapots (2000)***  
Jan Russell  
raku fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Mother & child (2001)***  
Robin Sinclair  
gas fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Lidded vessel (2002)***  
Dennis Asquith  
raku fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki

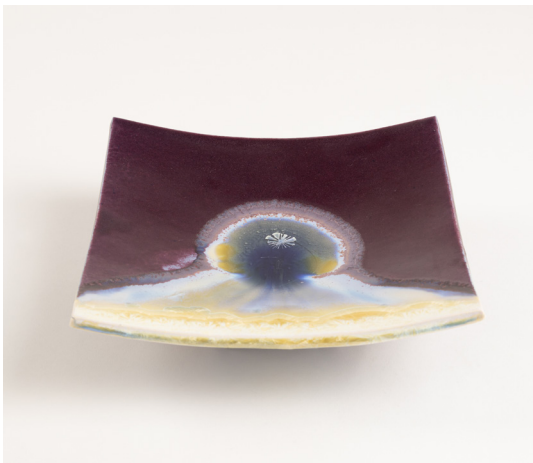


***Pair of blue ducks on rock (2003)***  
Joyce Young  
gas fired stoneware  
Collection of Puke Ariki



***Strapless top (2005)***

Anthea Stayt  
electric fired coiled  
paper clay  
Private collection



***Sunset (2005)***

Margaret Edwards  
electric fired stoneware  
with crystalline glaze  
Private collection



***Surrogate (2007)***

Jan Pidwell  
electric fired mixed  
stoneware  
Private collection



***Paisley tree (2008)***

Maria Brockhill

earthenware

Private collection



***Fungi stump bowl (2009)***

Joyce Young

gas fired stoneware

Private collection



***Black fantail (2010)***

C. Walsh and G. Hepworth

electric fired stoneware

Private collection





***Coiled Saggar pot  
with lid (2011)***  
Maureen Warren  
saggar fired stoneware  
Private collection



***Copper red bowl (2012)***  
Barbara Nicholls  
reduction gas fired porcelain  
Private collection



***Papatuanuku and Ranginui  
(2013)***  
Cecily Bull  
electric fired stoneware  
Private collection



***Inflammabull (2014)***

Jan Pidwell

electric fired stoneware

Private collection



***Eye to the future (2015)***

Graham Mulvay

electric fired stoneware

Private collection



***Purple flash (2016)***

Kathryn Gates

gas fired stoneware

Private collection



***Rainbow pot (2017)***

Anthea Stayt

electric fired coiled

paper clay

Private collection



***Porcelain vessel (2018)***

Carolyn Walsh

electric fired porcelain

Private collection



***Always a welcome (2019)***

Margaret Foley

electric fired stoneware

Private collection



***Three wise monkeys  
revisited (2020)***  
Rick Wood  
electric fired stoneware  
Private collection



***Healing vessel (2021)***  
Juliet Larkin  
stoneware  
Private collection



***Winter shadows (2022)***  
Gaye Atkinson  
raku fired raku clay  
Private collection

# Meet the Potters



## Dennis Asquith

Although no longer potting, Dennis spent many years as a member of New Plymouth Potters. He started pottery at a class in Point Howard, above Wellington Harbour. Working predominantly with raku firings, he built his beautifully engineered single pot top hat, gas fired raku kiln himself. The year he won the supreme award he fired the winning pot on the last day for entries and only just managed to deliver it before entries closed.

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## Gaye Atkinson

Returning to pottery in 2020 after a 30 year break, Gaye has gone back to her preferred firing method – raku. She enjoys how this method gives immediate results with the red hot pots being tonged out of the kiln and immersed in combustibles. Her influences are artefacts and landforms – mainly the volcanic Taranaki environment. She references it using metallic glazes to emulate metal and a variety of methods to echo our surroundings.

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## Maria Brockhill

*Te Ātiawa, Ngāti Ruanui, Ngāti Maniapoto*

Originally from Waitara, Maria is a fulltime ceramic artist at her studio in Bell Block. Winning the supreme award in 2008, her work has been exhibited throughout New Zealand and overseas. As seen in this early work, her work is heavily textured and impressed with stamps. She loves to make interesting and beautiful art with a sculptural presence, now often enhanced by vivid jewel coloured glazes.



### **Cecily Bull**

Cecily is inspired by organic shapes, curves and smooth flowing lines that invite the eye to caress and the mind to ponder the form. Her works combine local elements to manufactured clays, wedging in local sand and adding Taranaki andesite to the body of the work. Cecily works from her home studio in New Plymouth where she fires pieces to a range of temperatures in a natural gas kiln.

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### **Patricia (Pat) Close**

Pat began pottery around 1996 after searching in vain for a piece of porcelain or pottery to represent her two great danes, Gina and Suga. This was the beginning of many pottery great danes and other hand-built pieces. Pat became a valuable member of New Plymouth Potters, assisting for many years with hand-building classes run by the club. She went on to build her own gas fired kiln when approaching her eighties and experimented with success to produce difficult in-glaze luster glazes.

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### **Margaret Edwards**

Margaret began pottery at a local night school. She started on the wheel but later also excelled at slab-built work. Her special love was crystalline glazes. Always a perfectionist she spent years experimenting to perfect the crystalline glazes she is known for. She exhibited and won awards in national exhibitions including the New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts and had a long involvement with New Plymouth Potters and also the New Zealand Society of Potters. Margaret passed away in 2009.





### **Margaret Foley**

Margaret loves potting and describes how she gets withdrawal symptoms if she is not touching clay. From Midhirst, she has been potting for 48 years and although she enjoys raku and pit firing, salt firing is her passion, and she has spent many years working with a large, wood-fired salt kiln. Margaret's work has been exhibited both throughout New Zealand and internationally.

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### **Kathryn Gates**

Kathryn enjoys channelling her creative energy by developing forms on the wheel, especially platters and bowls, using high-fired stoneware and porcelain clay bodies. She particularly enjoys working with porcelain because of its translucent qualities. Working with Chinese style glazes, she experiments with ash, copper and barium, using reduction firing in a gas kiln to create a variety of effects and colours. Kathryn first connected with clay in 1982 at a Community Arts Centre course in Invercargill and joined New Plymouth Potters in 1986 after moving to Taranaki.

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### **Ruth Goodwin**

Ruth was an active member of New Plymouth Potters from the mid-1970s. She and her sister, Anne Tomasi began pottery through a night class, they both joined the New Plymouth Potters and became the "Raku Masters" at the annual raku firings. Care was taken to make these pots as even in thickness and as smooth as possible, as well as a beautiful shape to make sure they survived the firing process, and to show off the blooms this created on the unglazed surface.



### **Trish Kane**

Using a combination of wheel and hand-building techniques, Trish began potting in 1982. Her work developed into a focus on raku firing. Raku is a traditional Japanese style of firing and produces an ancient quality to ceramics. Through this focus, she was commissioned to make over 200 pots for the set of the movie *The Last Samurai*, filmed in Taranaki. As well as ceramics, Trish was also a talented painter. She passed away in 2005.

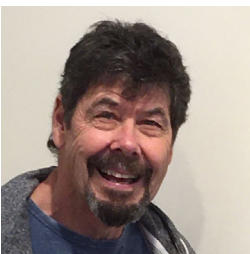
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### **Juliet Larkin**

Juliet's sculpture work is about inner worlds and emotions, tension and boundaries between things and objects. She is interested in a wide variety of materials, traditional and contemporary craft techniques, and our relationships with objects. She learned to throw on the wheel while living in Tochigi-ken, Japan, for two years teaching English. Juliet holds a Diploma of Fine Arts, majoring in sculpture, from the Otago Polytechnic School of Art and a Masters in Science Communication from the University of Canterbury.

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### **Graham Mulvay**

Graham has been a hobby potter for 40 years. He has been teaching the New Plymouth Potters beginners classes for many years. He prefers hand-building and non-domestic sculptural work that takes inspiration from nature. Recent works reflect more sculptural pieces based on natural forms and rock carvings, and he also creates items like birdbaths, bird feeders, tree forms and fungi pots.



### **Barbara Nicholls**

It is the thought processes and the feeling of smooth clay running through her fingers that gets Barbara going and she really enjoys throwing on the pottery wheel. She is influenced by oriental glazes and is interested in both form and function. As a member of New Plymouth Potters since 1989, Barbara has regularly been involved in the organisation of the annual exhibitions.

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### **Jan Pidwell**

Jan describes pottery as a never-ending journey of learning where the reward is the joy in creating, the challenge of making, and the feeling when you take that warm figure out of the kiln – your hard work resulting in something of which you are proud. With an early interest in clay and a lifelong fascination of the form, grace and behaviour of animals, Jan's pottery adventure began in earnest in 1998 when she joined New Plymouth Potters and continues to this day.

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### **Bev Rea**

An active member of New Plymouth Potters for many years, Bev enjoys the camaraderie and creativity of the group. She produces a variety of works, from large sculptures to fine porcelain. With two kilns in her backyard, a traditional kiln and also a large pit firing one, as well as access to a shared salt kiln, Bev enjoys the challenge of variety. She studied pottery at the Taranaki Polytechnic and summer school seminars at Massey University.



### **Patricia (Pat) Robertson**

Patricia, known as Pat, moved to New Plymouth in the mid-1990s. She came from the United States of America with her husband who took a job in the oil and gas industry. While in Taranaki, Pat joined the New Plymouth Potters and was a regular member. After a couple of years, the pair moved on to Australia.

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### **Jan Russell**

Living in New Plymouth and working from her home studio, Jan has been professionally potting since 1982. She is particularly interested in raku, enjoying the immediacy and unpredictability of the process. As well as teapots, Jan makes a wide range of birds and feeds hundreds more in her garden. She has exhibited throughout New Zealand.

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### **Robin Sinclair**

Robin was an active member of New Plymouth Potters for many and was always happy to give advice and help other members. He was especially known for his ventifact forms and he designed and made the plaque on the driveway wall of Te Henui Vicarage. An architect by day, Robin was one of the original designers of the soundshell at the Brooklands Bowl. Robin passed away in 2017.



### **Sue Spannagl**

Sue's main passion is earthenware pots – wheel thrown, slip decorated and gas fired. She made the slips herself and loves the contrast with the rich orange clay bodies. Her first exposure to pottery was as a child at her aunt's house with iconic artists Barry Brickell, Len Lye and Wilf Wright. She took classes in the 1980s after moving to Taranaki and then joined New Plymouth Potters which she found a haven for like-minded 'pottery nuts'. She worked out of her home studio with a gas fired kiln.

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### **Anthea Stayt**

Anthea creates unique sculptural works of art that are original in both form and finish - hand built using stoneware clay and then painted in an abstract manner. After a high bisque firing, the clay form becomes her canvas. By brushing on layers of vibrantly coloured oils, she produces the decorative and intriguing finish that has become her signature style. Anthea has participated in numerous solo and shared exhibitions throughout New Zealand.

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### **Carolyn Walsh and Gregg Hepworth**

For Carolyn, using agateware, the mixing of different coloured clays, creates a visual relationship to landscape. The finished piece is always unique and as much the result of physics as it is creative intention. Her collaboration with Greg explores their shared re-connection with the landscapes of 'home' after a long time away. Walking

Arawata Bridal Track in Queenstown, they would often catch a glimpse of two small black Pīwakawaka along the path. For Greg, painting on a ceramic surface creates new, satisfying challenges.



### **Maureen Warren**

Maureen Warren's pottery shows a love of nature and natural textures. No longer able to pot due to arthritis, Maureen preferred the natural finish of raku, saggar and pit firing to get the look and feel she desired. Although appreciating the calming affect her wheel work gave her, she was also unafraid to experiment with and adapt new techniques.

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### **Rick Wood**

While on a teacher exchange to Oregon in 1987, Rick lived in a house with a pottery studio he could not use. This inspired him to learn. He enrolled in classes and produced a range of work over 10 years before taking a break. After retirement, Rick joined New Plymouth Potters and is currently both President of the club and the hand-building tutor. His works range from useful dinnerware, to large sculptural pieces, and quirky, surreal items. He seldom uses the wheel nowadays as finds making round things limiting.

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### **Joyce Young**

Joyce was a founding member and former President of New Plymouth Potters. A self-taught artist, Joyce described her work as inspired by her Taranaki environment of rocks and sea, coastal and mountain. Using textured surfaces, she produced a variety of works, focussing mainly on garden sculptures and decorative wall panels. She exhibited throughout New Zealand, and commissioned a work for former Prime Minister Jim Bolger. Joyce passed away in 2015.



# Reflections on a Journey

Gaye Atkinson

I first encountered pottery in the late 1970s when we moved to the small Waikato town of Morrinsville. 'Open Pottery' signs were scattered throughout Waikato towns and rural roads and many craft shops clamoured for stock. If you mentioned you potted they hassled you for work no matter your competency level!

My first wheel was hard work as it was a wooden kick one with a large concrete fly wheel. Gaining enough momentum to get the clay turning fast enough while you kicked was quite a challenge for a female of small stature! These were the most common ones then, based on a design by Bernard Leach who established the famous United Kingdom St Ives pottery and who was considered the international guru. His book *A Potters Book* gained almost biblical status here.

The great man visited Aotearoa in 1962. Japanese potter Shoji Hamada also visited in 1965, and was equally revered in those formative days.

Prominent among the many kiwi potters who later gained recognition for their work and teachings were Barry Brickell of the famous Driving Creek Railway & Potteries, Yvonne Rust of the Quarry Arts Centre, Jack and Peggy Laird of Waimea Potteries, Mirek Smisek of Te Horo, Master Potter Len Castle as well as their many talented contemporaries.

Brickell, Castle and others of that era held workshops throughout Aotearoa, teaching their techniques to thousands of

keen students. I was fortunate in coming through in that era and was privileged to have received tuition from the now much revered Len Castle, Mirek Smisek, Ian Firth, Rick Rudd, Brian Gartside and others.

Unique to Aotearoa, Rick Rudd's Museum, the Quartz Museum of Studio Ceramics, is the only space solely dedicated to studio ceramics in this country and is the largest and most diverse public ceramic display. This collection comprises approximately 700 items by New Zealand and internationally acclaimed potters.

In Taranaki in the 1980s I was invited to join The Potters Gallery New Plymouth, which operated for many years. It was established by well-known local potters such as Ngaere Adams, Joyce Young, Jane Capon, Shane Wagstaff, Noleen Denton, Jeanette (Nette) Skelton, Fran Conquest and Olwen Ewing.

Currently pottery is enjoying a strong and growing renaissance - both as a craft to learn, as well as for its functional and decorative use and appeal. Since the early days the once frowned on, more sculptural, 'decorative ware' has become mainstream alongside 'domestic ware.' My work belongs in the former category.

After a 30 year break, I have returned to pottery - my first creative love, and re-joined New Plymouth Potters. I am thrilled that during those 30 years it is as strong, if not stronger than ever.

**Puke Ariki**



**NPDC**

