

Trip to Falkland Islands under Shackleton Scholarship scheme

21st January 2015 to 13th February 2015

I departed from Brize Norton late at night to begin an adventure, fulfilling a lifetime ambition to visit the Falkland Islands. We had a rather long delay in Ascension Island due to bad weather affecting flights in the Falklands and eventually I was collected from the airport at Mount Pleasant by Jenny Luxton and driven to my base at Lafone House in Stanley.

The following day I met up with Emma Brook who had arranged my itinerary of workshops and we went down to the Museum to examine the kiln. This has now been installed in an outbuilding where it will be safe to fire, and all seemed to be in order. We then collected the materials which has been sent out from England, thanks to Stanley Services, and took them up to the Senior School where I was to hold two workshops over the weekend. There was an excellent turnout for both of these events and the tuition I was able to offer was very well received. Quite a range of interesting pots were made and for most people it was their first experience of working in clay.

The first Monday of my visit I was free to explore Stanley and enjoyed a trip to Gipsy Cove & Tumbledown. In the evening I was back up at school to work with an art evening class which meets each week and again I got them experimenting with clay, making quite adventurous forms.

We were able to meet again the following week so they benefitted from two long sessions.

On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday I worked with a number of different year groups at the Senior School with the help of Jenni Sol, the art teacher. All the children were enthusiastic, perhaps a little over ambitious, but they did some excellent work and I started to worry if we would fit everything in the kiln when it was dry.

On Friday, 30th January I was collected by the manager of Darwin Lodge and we went up to the school to collect all I would need for a day-long workshop the following day. The drive out to Darwin was interesting as it was the first time I had been away from Stanley since my arrival. It is interesting how journeys are measured by time, and not miles. Unmade roads must take a toll on vehicles and it was obvious that many vehicles have cracked windscreens – we worry in the UK if there is just a small stone mark! There were 10 adults signed up for the workshop on Saturday and I was lucky to be able to borrow a wheel from Jenny Luxton, enabling the students to try their hands at 'throwing'. It was a very busy day and I gave the students a theme of making boxes for the morning session. Some were working outside and the sun and wind was drying the clay rather too quickly so we had to wrap the work where possible. The afternoon throwing was great fun and everyone managed, with a little help, to produce a small piece much to their delight. Now came the problem of getting all this work back to Stanley. Luckily one of the participants agreed to let the work dry and would then transport it herself later in the week – it is not easy to move damp pots without damage, especially on bumpy roads!

I fitted in a short tip to Sea Lion Island, travelling by plane from Darwin on Sunday and returning to Darwin on the Monday. It was a wonderful day with bright sunshine and I just explored the island enjoying the wildlife. I returned to Stanley in good time to work with the evening class.

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday was scheduled for me to work with different age groups at the Junior School. This meant taking all the materials round to different class rooms. The children were delighted to be using clay I tried to focus on different ideas for the various ages. The younger children found it quite challenging to concentrate and got frustrated when their masterpieces went wrong! The groups of up to 16 children were quite large and it was hard to give individual attention to each child. I had excellent support from their form teachers but I felt that if the groups had been smaller I would have achieved more. However they were just delighted to have something to show for their efforts and we used grasses and other materials to add pattern to the work they did.

One evening I went to Stanley House to do some work with the boarders from the schools. It was a group of Juniors who came and they had fun for a couple of hours between supper and bed. Hopefully they didn't skip their homework!

At the end of the sessions with the Junior School Emma Brook very kindly collected me and all my materials as we were to set off to West Falkland the following day for a day-long workshop at Fox Bay Social Club. Before leaving I started to collect up some of the work from the schools and took it down to the kiln shed, ready for packing the following week. There was a considerable amount but luckily it had dried well and with careful packing I was able to move it to the Museum where Steve Massam had erected some shelves in the kiln

shed. He was a great help getting the kiln ready for me to use. We worked through the instructions together and he is keen to try and do more firings at a later date.

My last weekend was to be the workshop on West Falkland. Emma had organised the trip and we were able to stay with her parents nearby. We had an excellent trip over, by road and ferry stopping in at Port Howard for a glass of wine with Emma's sister and her family before setting off to Fox Bay. Changeable weather and a spectacular double rainbow on our way across made it a memorable journey. We had a mixture of adults and children, all very keen to try and make pots.

It was a relaxed day and we all brought something for lunch and some interesting work was achieved. We were due to return to Stanley on Sunday but the weather was bad and the ferry cancelled so we had an extra day to explore (and get the pots dry for transport).

The final few days were busy ones gathering all the work together and packing the kiln at the Museum. Sadly not quite enough room for everything but more reason to fire the kiln again!

I was finally able to open the kiln on Thursday, the day before my departure. By the end of the afternoon it was cool enough to unpack and I was delighted there had been no mishaps. Sorting out all the work and returning it to its makers is going to be quite a job but both Emma and Jenni Sol are going to help out.

My final evening was with Jenny Luxton helping her with a few pots and her new kiln – more instructions to be read and digested. And so my 3 weeks has flown past with lots of fun and hopefully I have given some encouragement to budding potters. I have certainly had plenty of students and lots of help from the schools and the Museum – I do hope they will be able to carry on in some way and I wish them lots of luck. My thanks go to all those who have made my visit a truly memorable one.