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News

Bottle oven brought to life as a concert venue

Potteries-based singer Samantha Lloyd to perform at pottery

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ONE of Stoke-on-Trent's largest bottle ovens will become a music venue for one night only as a concert is held where the firing chamber once stood.

Potteries-based singer-songwriter Samantha Lloyd will take to the stage inside the kiln at Heron Cross Pottery in Fenton tomorrow.

The gig is being organised by the Potteries Bottle Oven Owner Club to showcase the new and imaginative ways the iconic structures can be used. The club - which includes most of the bottle oven owners in the city - is working hard to establish best practice in maintaining the city's bottle ovens and and explore imaginative ways of bringing them to life.

Membership of the club, which was formed in 2019 as part of the Stoke-on-Trent Ceramic Heritage Action Zone, covers every type of oven, from well-known examples of up-draught hovel ovens at Middleport Pottery and Gladstone Pottery Museum to Moorland Pottery's unusual four-chambered muffle kiln in Burslem, as well as calcining kilns spread across the city from Middleport to Etruria to Longton.

Club chairman Jon Plant, of Moorland Pottery, said: "It is essential that the city of Stoke-on-Trent has a focused group of bottle oven owners that are united by the need to preserve these iconic structures. This exciting event represents a new and creative way to promote bottle ovens to a much wider public.

"It brings life and purpose to these wonderful structures. As a club we are hoping it is a blueprint for other event-based



GIG: Samantha Lloyd.

activities throughout the city, that will embrace a much wider population."

The bottle oven has long been an iconic symbol of the Potteries, with around 2,000 existing across Stoke-on-Trent at their peak. Now just 47 potters' ovens, muffle kilns and calcining kilns - as well as three which have collapsed - remain standing on 29 separate sites across the city.

Ian and Julia Godfrey, owners of the bottle oven at Heron Cross Pottery, said: "Owning a bottle oven causes mixed emotions. There is very considerable pride in owning such an iconic building, but this is offset by finding something practical to do with the bottle oven so that there's sufficient income to properly maintain the structure.

"That means we must seek novel uses for the bottle oven and hopefully the acoustic properties of our oven will prove a 'hit.'"



ICONIC: The top of the bottle oven at Heron Cross Pottery.



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