

Pen Making Forum Saturday 21st September 2019

Six members gathered in The Phil Harris Auditorium for an enlightened discussion about their experience in pen making. All attendees had brought examples of their work.

We started at the end with the first point being about finishes. I have noticed that finish seems to be come up early in most of the forums. Whatever piece is on the table one of the first questions is “ what finish did you use?”. All in the group had tried CA finish and there were several methods employed to apply CA. The discussion identified timbers such as Huon Pine and NG Rosewood that contain oils preventing the successful application of CA. To overcome this apply Methylated Spirits (a denatured Alcohol) to dry the oil. Gary explained that he often uses blond shellac thinned down to about 50% as a sealer before sanding further with eee cream. NB eee reacts with steel and if you hit a bush with the cream it will bleed black back into the timber. To prevent the black reaction you always wipe from the end of the pen over the bush DO NOT pull the polishing material back towards the pen. Lift the cloth replay a new section of cloth to the pen blank and friction rub from the centre of the blank to the ends continuing over the bush.

Eventually, the EEE will be completely removed from the steel this you will know by the lack of blackening on the polishing cloth.

A link that may assist with pen finishes. Supplied by Gary Bidgood

Kurt Hertzog is a world professional pen turner if you don't know him.

http://www.kurthertzog.com/articles/20_PenFinishes_LR0106.pdf

Drilling the blanks has posed issues to us all and as a group having tried several methods it would seem that drilling on the lathe using pin jaws and reversing the blank at about the $\frac{3}{4}$ mark is the way to avoid a lot of the issues. It helps if an accurate centre point is marked on each end of the blank before drilling commences. Gary uses HSS twist bits that he sharpens on his Tormek, explaining that he gets a point with a second bevel that helps with accuracy. He is able to sharpen bits down to 3mm on the Tormek. Tapered point drill bits are another way to drill. These tools were very good for Gary's laminated work. Brad point drills were the most used tool here.

Setting the tube in the blank. CA and epoxy seem to be the choices here. It was agreed these are messy and requires a planned set of actions to achieve a satisfactory result. Rob had the answer, Urethane Glue, a single component moisture curing adhesive that cures on the exposure of moisture in either the substrate or atmosphere. In its cured state the adhesive is elastic and flexible. Gorilla glue is one example.

Don B who likes to create a chunky look in his creations added that he often adds colour to the tube when crafting acrylic pens. This helps hide the brass that comes through in some of the lighter shades of acrylics. He also uses it create a deeper richness of colour as witnessed in two pens he turned from the same acrylic but he coloured the brass tubes on one. Did you know that Don creates a pen for each colour shirt he has. I am sure if you ask him he will tell you the story of how that came about.

The pen mill. We all have them; some of us have more than one. No one thought they were ideal particularly on the really hard woods like gidgee. Don M had a sled jig to use on the bandsaw and stated the blade must be sharp. Various methods of using the blank against a sanding disc were discussed. Thanks to Richard Cooper who shared this with me in a conversation at Tuesdays workshop. If you have both right angles set correctly it is very effective. A deburring tool is perhaps the easiest way to clear the inside edge of the brass tube. Gary always pulls a cloth through his tubes to remove dust and debris.

The Choice of chisel. Surprisingly everyone had a personal and different chisel that was predominately used to shape the pen. The only consensus was that none of us was using a scraper to do the job. It is here that we discussed youtube videos. It needs a comment that a lot of content for turning articles that is available on the internet, does not cover good techniques in turning. At times the potential for harm is extremely high. WSQ provides a safe place in which to learn, share and practice the art of woodturning. I see this willingness to share knowledge at workshops and forums regularly and I thank all members for adding their stitch to the rich tapestry of my life (so far)

We all make mistakes and have no wish to throw away expensive parts of kits. Disassembly tools are used. The writer is still looking for an effective way to disassemble the top barrel of a parker style click pen. A suggestion I am yet to try is using a hand lubricant such as hand sanitiser. I also have been advised that check some back copies of Woodturning Magazine possibly issues 279 and 314. These and many other resources are available in the WSQ Library.

Thank you to all the participants the morning passed quickly, the company was good and the exchange of information flowed freely. Next Month's Forums is on lidded boxes any style or shape it really just needs a lid.