Bamboo Journal

IBRA ONLINE NEWSLETTER

Year 13
Issue 21
October 2020

Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association

In this issue:

Bamboo Journal issue 21 - october 2020

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Front cover:	Christian Burger
Photo on page 2:	Detail of a Christian Burger rod
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EDITORIAL

by Maurizio Cardamone

2020 will be remembered for a long time as the year of the Coronavirus. It's impossible not to mention it here too, perhaps in a "fishing and rodmaking" key (to downplay it a little).

The illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (this is the real name of the coronavirus) is called COVID-19, even if it spread as a pandemic in the second quarter of 2020, and is still growing strong, above all in the countries that initially seemed to be excluded, like the USA, all of South America, India and many African countries. The pandemic has had such devastating repercussions internationally on all economic activities, as well as on our health of course, that to return to the situation we left behind, we will surely need a long time and suffering, as well as a good vaccine.

As I'm writing this the number of cases in the world is almost 38 million, with almost 1,100,000 casualties and over 8 million active cases.

In Italy the evolution of the infection and the containment norms based specifically on very strict restrictions on movements, first blocked to the places of residence and then limited to the provinces and regions, influenced the 2020 fishing season greatly. Almost all the most important basins, above all in northern Italy where the spread of the illness has been very serious since February, postponed the start of the season.

While the annual IBRA rodmaking course was held in two long weekends and completed (just in time) in mid-January (you will find Oliviero Mossier's report here) our big annual gathering planned for the end of May, was cancelled.

Now the situation seems to be back to normal (for the fishing naturally), I can see that we have lived a "strange" season everywhere in Italy. Most of my fly friends and acquaintances and also from what I have read on the fly fishing forums, complain about less "collaboration" from the finned ones, less hatches everywhere (not only in Italy) and in general a season with inexplicable ups and downs. This has been my personal experience too and this year I have allowed myself more "blanks" than I was used to in past years.

As it is really difficult to associate SARS-CoV-2 to the trout and grayling's mood, I must think that this is part of a trend tied to other factors, which are the ones we have been talking about for years: pollution, anthropic activities, the impact of hydroelectric plants on the levels in many rivers and streams, too many waste treatment plants (sic!), cormorants, global warming, climate conditions, etc.

Enough: as you know, I always enjoy talking a little about the fishing season, but I do so without claiming it to be a scientific paper. Only bar chatter!

As far as rodmaking is concerned, I'm convinced that the lockdown and smart working caused an increase in the production of bamboo rods (as well as flies after all: my boxes have never been so full). I don't have precise numbers, but a plausible feeling. In this issue you will see a nice series of photos that show the workshops of many IBRA members. I'm sure that these workshops saw a great increase in the number of shavings during the lockdown .

The decreased activity of the finned ones I mentioned above is reflected in the ways and in the techniques with which many (fly) fish today: nymph fishing and above all some of its, let's say nonconformist, variants, are practiced a lot today and certainly need longer rods than those we mostly associate with the use of bamboo. Read Giorgio Grondona's article on this topic.

In this article, in addition to those I have already mentioned: a very interesting article by Frederic Leroy on the effects of thermal treatments on bamboo and a note by Davide Fiorani where he illustrates a special and "varnish saving" method to varnish the blanks.

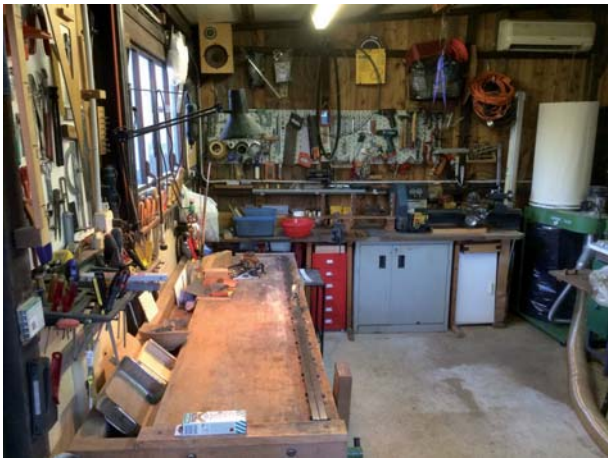
And more: an almost philosophical reflection (certainly romantic) on the bamboo rods by Harrison Ross Steeves, and to end a long self-interview by Stephen Boshoff who talks about not only his activity as a rodmaker, but also of fly fishing in South Africa, with lots of information and fun facts.

I was also informed that Chris Burger, a great friend of IBRA, and organizer of the 9th European Gathering in 2018 which was held in Waischenfeld (Germany), has left us prematurely. For all those who remember him a nice picture on the front cover page. Christian attended the IBRA gatherings from 2014.

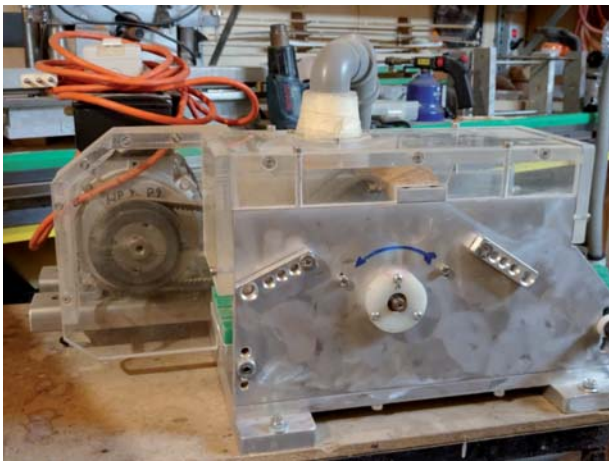
As always I wish you a good read and I ask the readers to contribute to the next issues of the Bamboo Journal with suggestions or criticisms, but above all articles to publish.

Write to me at: editor@rodmakers.it

In this issue the interlayer pages
are dedicated to the images
of the shops of the IBRA members



Alberto Azzoni



Argeo Babbi

Daniele Baldini

Claudio Biagi

FORGED BAMBOO, EVOLUTION OR REVOLUTION?

by Frédéric Leroy

I have been making rods for a few years now after crossing paths with a great rodmaker, Bernard Rigal, who gave me this virus that is much more pleasant than the ones we see today. Bernard and I spent many hours rodmaking, but also sharing techniques and ways to continuously improve the technique of split cane rodmaking. Exchanges with the community of major European makers, during the gatherings also taught me a lot and I always come out full of ideas and projects. Finally, last year, with Bernard and Jean-Louis, we were able to recreate the French Rodmakers association "Les amis du bambou refendu" which I have the honour to chair and we were able to organize French meetings again. This year, we had no gathering where we could once again have shared some great achievements, I decided to take advantage of this time to bring together in this article the work that I have been carrying out, for 2 years, on the technique of forged bamboo. Here are some aspects.

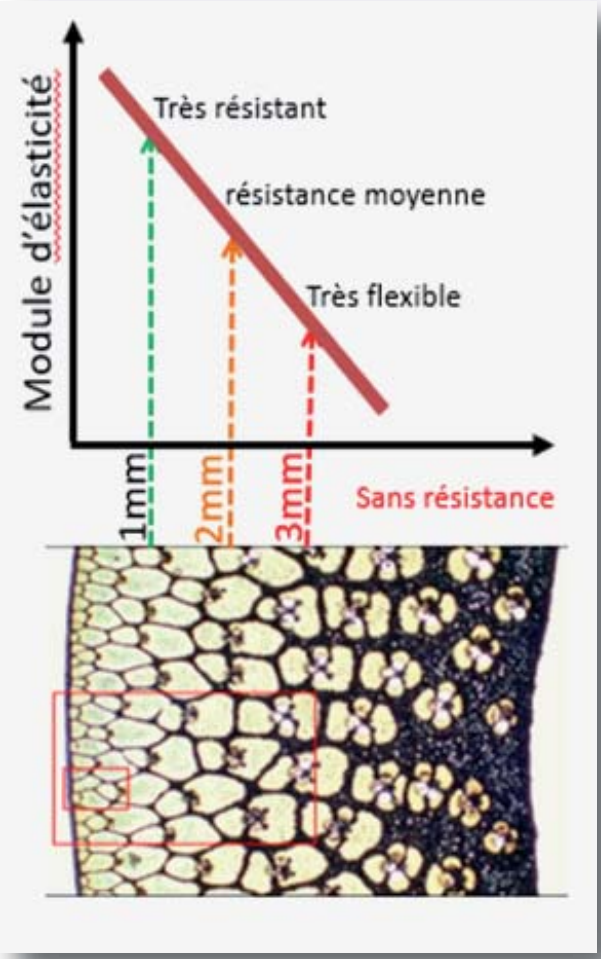
The heat treatment of bamboo has been the subject of numerous studies to measure its real effect on the mechanical properties of our dear split cane rods. The studies of Wolfram SCHOTT (Bamboo under the microscope, Bamboo in the laboratory) and Robert Eaton MILWARD (BAM-BOO, Fact, Fiction and Flyrods) refer to this subject. They highlight, among other things:

- The influence of the heat treatment parameters (temperature / treatment time) on the mechanical characteristics and its efficiency over time.

- The internal structure of bamboo and its mechanical characteristics depending on the density and quality of the fibres which differ considera-bly between the enamel and the pith.

With regards to the influence of heat treatment, the conclusions of these studies show that the improvement of mechanical characteristics is mainly linked to the evacuation of residual bamboo moisture during treatment and to chemical transformations. which occur at the highest temperatures (between 180 and 200 ° C). Above these temperatures, degradations lead to a drop in mechanical characteristics. The modulus of elasticity, which represents the intrinsic characteristic of the material, is improved by around 8 to 10% during a treatment carried out between 180 and 200 ° C, but after a few weeks / months, the reabsorption of moisture by bamboo, whatever the protective treatment provided (varnish, impregnation, etc.), reduces this effect to a final improvement of the order of 2 to 3%…

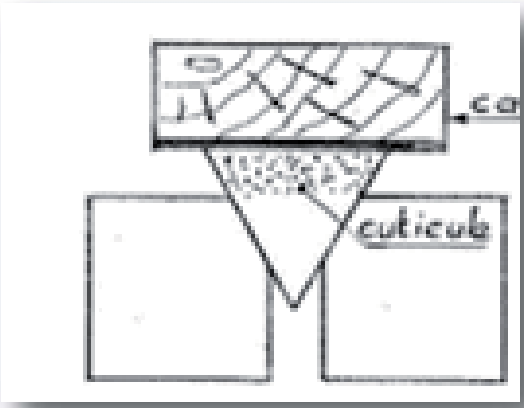
Regarding the internal structure of bamboo, the quality of the surface fibres is much better than at the core, and tests carried out on test piec-es taken at different depths have demonstrated this.



The modulus of elasticity, which translates the flexural strength of the material, is linked to the nature and density of the fibres.

It is higher on the surface (just under the enamel), then decreases drastically to be no more than 50% of its value at 2.5mm from the surface.

Beyond 4mm the resistance becomes almost zero.



Furthermore, since the external fibres are the most stressed, when the rod is bent, they must be absolutely preserved during manufacture.

It is difficult to do this using the classic planing form technique which requires final surfacing (flattening) on the enamel side.

It is easier to maintain the external curvature when using the famous Morgan Hand Mill, by using a support guide (anvil) rounded to the diame-ter of the bamboo.

Rodmakers often implement good practices to take these elements into account, among which we can cite:

- Improving the quality of heat treatment, ovens and temperature and time parameters.

- The care taken to remove as few dense power fibres as possible from below the enamel, during the planing phases.

I have asked myself about the best way to improve both, trying to take advantage of my professional experience in the forging field. In this process, metallic materials are deformed when hot and are subjected to heat treatments to improve their mechanical characteristics. The concept of fiberizing is important. Indeed, under the effect of successive deformations, the structure of the material made of metallic grains is aligned, which is called fiberizing

The mechanical characteristics of the materials thus deformed are better in the direction of the fibres thus formed. This makes the forgings stronger than the castings. During finishing operations, such as machining for example, it is important not to cut the fibres so that the mechanical resistance remains maximum with respect to the forces.

Why not apply these principles to the processing of bamboo?

This is what is done to deform the nodes of the bamboo in order to flatten them out. The nodes are heated and then straightened to align the fibres in the extension of the rod. But the techniques are often rudimentary and again, the thermal and mechanical conditions are approxi-mate, as well as the results ...

I therefore embarked on a bamboo forging trial with the aim of:

1 - mastering the heating conditions

2 - controlling the resistance and the deformation of bamboo

3 - measuring the effects of hot compression on the mechanical characteristics of bamboo

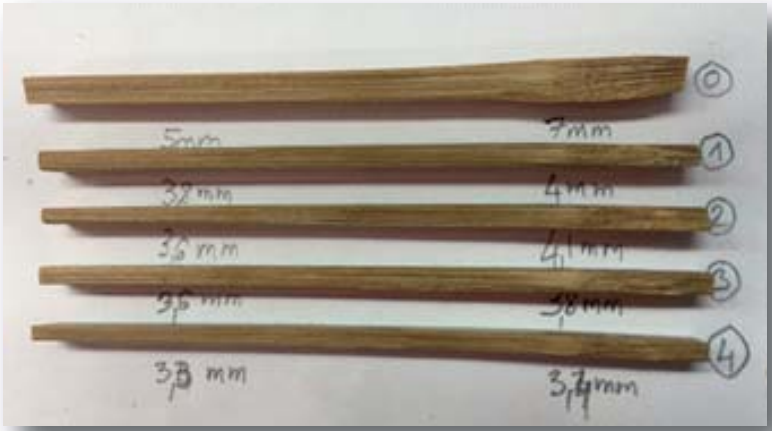
In order to conduct tests, I decided to use a screw press equipped with heated tools, as is done in metalworking with much more powerful means.

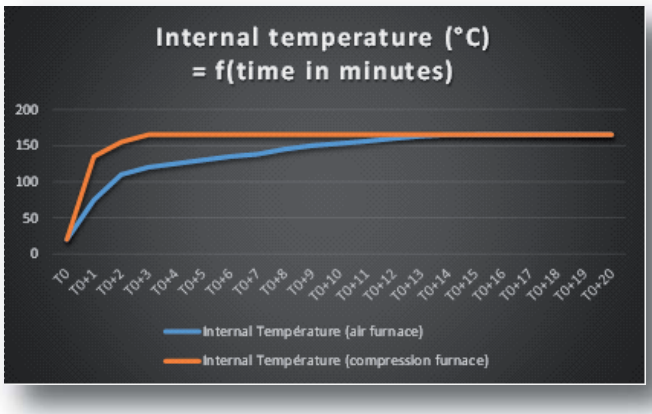
The lower and upper tools are heated by electric resistances connected to a regulator. Thermocouples introduced into each tool allow the temperature to be regulated with an accuracy of around 2 degrees. Various tests have made it possible to develop the right thermal conditions.

Test piece 0: before compression (visible nodes).

Test pieces 1 to 4: after compression, with different temperature and pressure parameters.

The values shown are the thicknesses measured at both ends.





By inserting a thermocouple inside the bamboo, we can compare the rate of temperature rise of the interior of the bamboo stick, in two configurations: the conventional oven and the press oven. The following curve clearly shows that the temperature of the strips rises much faster with the press oven.

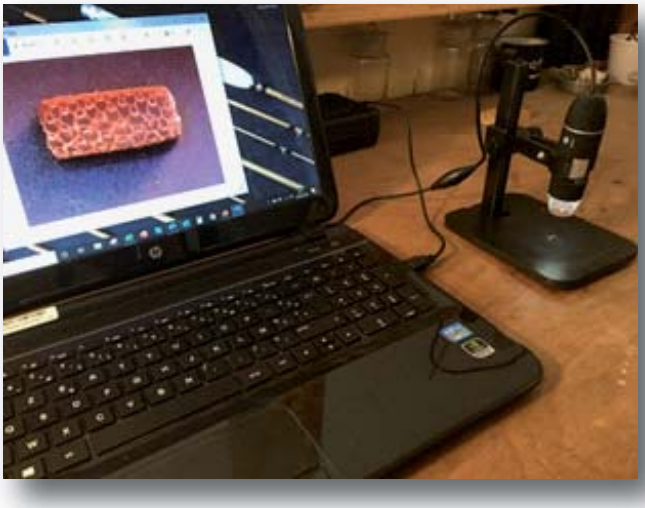
On this curve, we see that the core of the strip (3mm * 5.5mm) has reached the set temperature (here 160 ° C) after only 3 minutes while in the case of a conventional oven, it is only after 13 minutes that this temperature is reached!

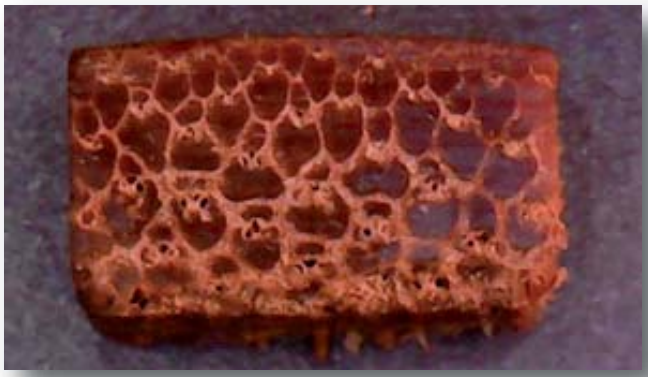
The literature generally recommends heating in the order of 15 minutes to the set temperature with a conventional oven.

Following this observation, I carried out all of the forging tests with a heating time of 3 minutes.

It is impressive to note during these 3 minutes of heating (before compression) that the humidity of the bamboo comes out like steam from a kettle, when you prepare a tea. This happens from the first minute when the tools are docked, and clearly shows the rate of temperature rise of the bamboo core.

After hot pressing several strips, I wanted to know the effect of forging on the mechanical characteristics of bamboo. I assumed that the hot-pressed fibres would therefore be denser and better orientated, as in the case of metal forging, and that it would result in better mechanical strength. First, I equipped myself with a small microscope to connect to the computer in order to observe more closely the structure of the bamboo before and after compression. I wanted to check that the density of the fibres had indeed increased and the absence of decohesion (delamination) defects, as can also be seen in metallic materials during deformation.





Before compression: The strip has a width of 5.5mm and a thickness of 3mm. While being in the zone of best mechanical characteristic, one distinguishes many decohesions (channels)

After compression: the thickness is reduced to 2.5 mm, and the channels have disappeared

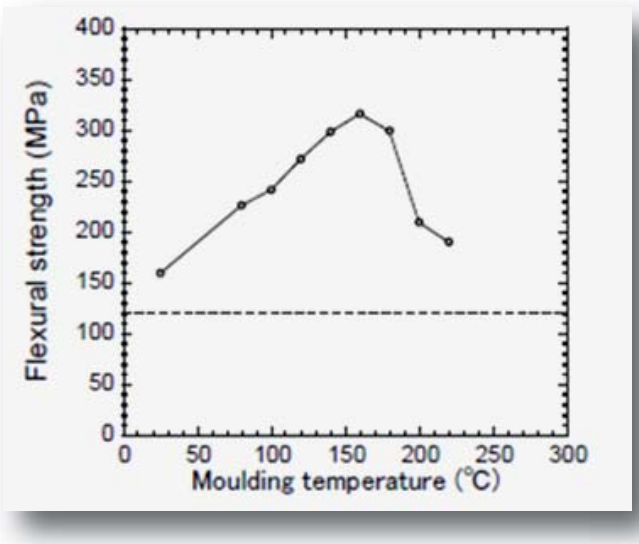
At this stage, the process employed demonstrates its ability to:

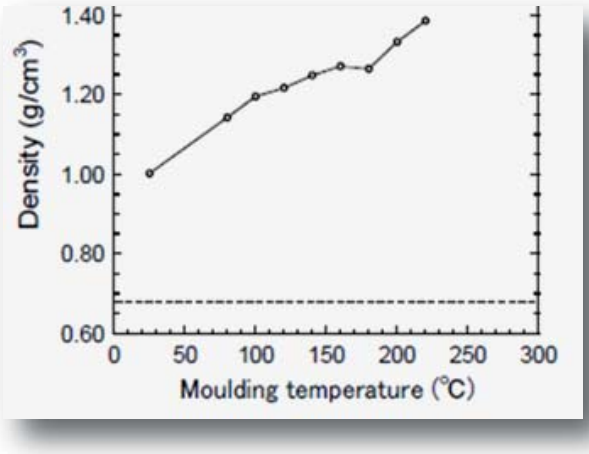
- heat the bamboo precisely and quickly

- deform the fibres with a thickness reduction of up to 20% by compacting the fibres together, and by closing the "channel" type porosities.

We can therefore hope for an improvement in mechanical conditions. But of what order?

While searching the net, I discovered that hot compressing bamboo was practiced for certain applications, such as making floor tiles. As every-one knows, bamboo is used more and more for many applications and in particular for making plates made up of several layers of strips. These are heat pressed under powerful presses, then glued together





With these such important values, it was necessary to embark on tests in order to better understand them. I asked Peer Doering Arjes to per-form mechanical tests on specimens made from pseudosasa amabilis bamboo and parameters closer to the production process that I devel-oped. 3 batches of 7 specimens (dimension L80 * l5 * 3mm) were carried out: 7 untreated, 7 treated at 180 ° C and 7 treated at 180 ° C and com-pressed at 150 ° C

These tests, carried out under identical conditions (after baking the test pieces, in order to put them all under homogeneous hygrometric conditions), showed that:

The compression ratio (variation in thickness h) is 11.7% on the 3rd batch. At this rate, the density (ρ) increased by an average of 7.2% between an untreated specimen and a compressed specimen.

The modulus of elasticity increases on average by:

- 5.8% by heat treatment
- 13.6% by heat treatment and compression

This series of tests confirms that forging is twice as effective as conventional heat treatment in improving the me-chanical bending characteristics of bamboo.

• Serie 28: pac-leroy	non traité				05.08.2019
Proben-kennung	m g	b mm	h mm	E_B N/mm²	ρ g/cm³
pac-leroy-01	1,274	5,07	3,02	28710	1,03
pac-leroy-02	1,262	5,01	3,07	28333	1,02
pac-leroy-03	1,293	5,09	3,05	30040	1,04
pac-leroy-04	1,288	5,11	3,04	28756	1,03
pac-leroy-05	1,267	5,09	3,05	28300	1,02
pac-leroy-06	1,260	5,03	3,06	27561	1,02
pac-leroy-07	1,264	5,09	3,03	28766	1,02
moyenne	1,27	5,07	3,05	28638	1,03
• Serie 29: pac-leroy	traité 180°C 120mn				05.08.2019
Proben-kennung	m g	b mm	h mm	E_B N/mm²	ρ g/cm³
pac-leroy-11	1,231	5,05	3,04	30982	0,99
pac-leroy-12	1,250	5,02	3,04	30506	1,02
pac-leroy-13	1,247	5,01	3,03	30564	1,02
pac-leroy-14	1,220	4,97	2,97	30208	1,03
pac-leroy-15	1,224	4,99	3,02	29464	1,01
pac-leroy-16	1,240	4,98	3,03	30549	1,03
pac-leroy-17	1,196	4,96	3,00	29412	1,00
moyenne	1,23	5,00	3,02	30241	1,01
delta /28	-3,4%	-1,4%	-0,9%	5,6%	-1,1%
• Serie 30: pac-leroy	traité 180°C 120mn + comprimé (T°150°C)				06.08.2019
Proben-kennung	m g	b mm	h mm	E_B N/mm²	ρ g/cm³
pac-leroy-21	1,224	5,22	2,67	31664	1,10
pac-leroy-22	1,218	5,20	2,72	31639	1,08
pac-leroy-25	1,211	5,15	2,74	30453	1,07
pac-leroy-26	1,220	5,15	2,67	33727	1,11
pac-leroy-27	1,251	5,15	2,74	33792	1,10
pac-leroy-28	1,231	5,18	2,68	32471	1,11
pac-leroy-29	1,233	5,23	2,60	33922	1,13
moyenne	1,23	5,18	2,69	32524	1,10
delta /28	-3,6%	2,2%	-11,7%	13,6%	7,2%

Hot pressing has an effect that is at least twice that of conventional heat treatment in improving the modulus of elasticity. We can therefore consider this to be a major step forward. But, is this effect long-lasting? We know from studies by Wolfram SCHOTT that the effect of heat treatment decreases over time as bamboo, even protected with epoxy varnish, rehydrates. What about the effect of compression?

In order to continue the study, I resumed new tests, this time with the objective of measuring the variation in the modulus of elasticity over time, on treated or compressed specimens. To carry out these tests, the objective was to measure, immediately before and after treatment or compression, the flexural strength of a batch of test specimens, then to measure the development of this resistance 1 week and 1 month later.

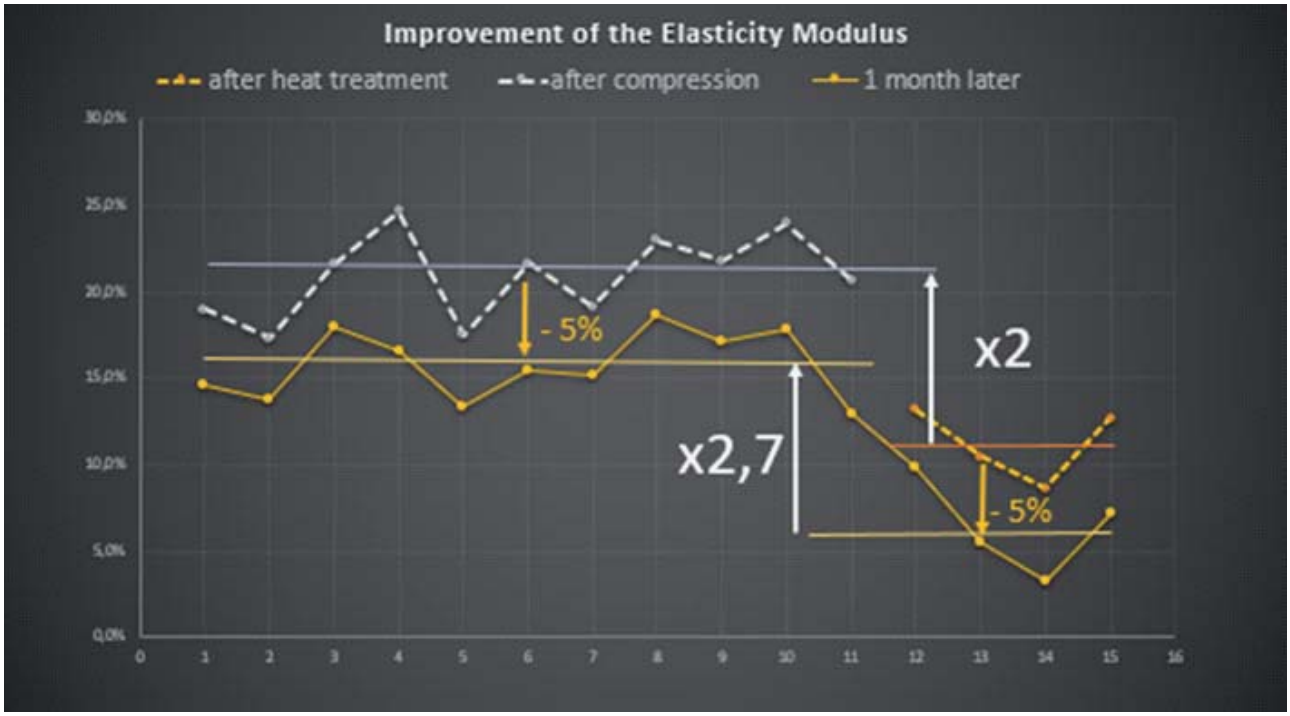
In this case, I could no longer use the service of an analytical laboratory, but I had to be able to perform the mechanical tests myself, the same day of treatment and on specific dates.

This could be done by creating a tool for measuring the bend under load, and by precisely comparing the bending of each specimen subjected to the same load (here a weight of 500g at the end of the specimen).

The bending values measured on the gauge, corrected for the variation in the moment of inertia (which varies due to the variation in dimen-sions before and after the treatment or compression), allowed me to compare the intrinsic resistance of the material.

The measurements show the change in the elastic modulus of the material, after heat treatment and compression. The following graph shows that we find, with these measurements, an improvement of the order of 10% of the modulus of elasticity, which corresponds to a factor of 2 between the efficiency of the heat treatment (test specimens 12 to 15) and that of compression (test specimens 1 to 11), confirming the tests carried out in the laboratory (or rather the validity of my artisanal method….). On the other hand, the compressed test pieces, after 1 month, regain humidity from the ambient air, just like the one treated in a conventional manner. The weight measurements made on each specimen at each stage also confirm this fact.

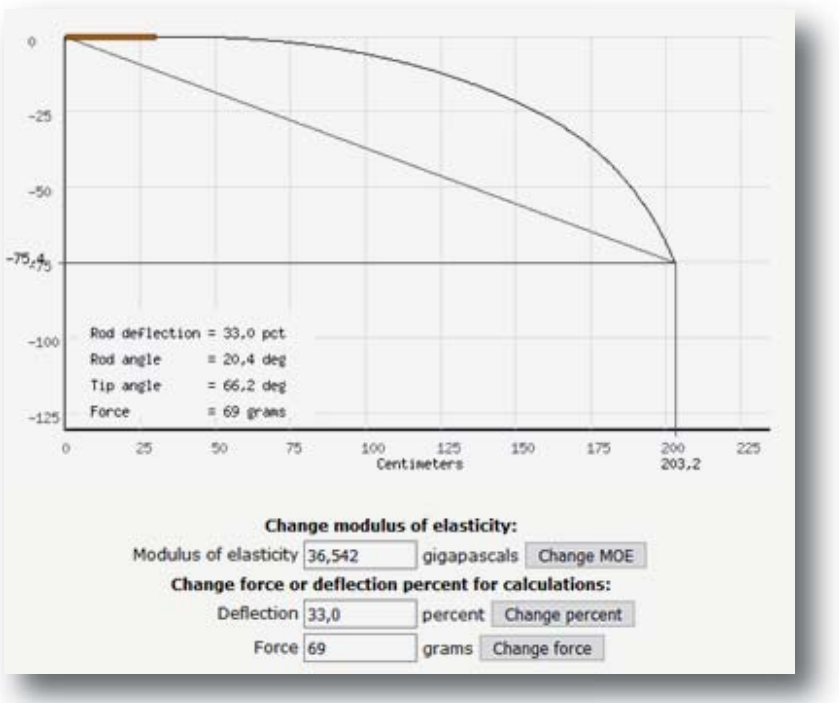
After 1 month, the moisture uptake being equal in absolute value for both processes, the modulus of elasticity improvement factor between the treated bamboo and the forged bamboo becomes 2.7, which is considerable. After 1 year, moisture uptake can still cause the treated bam-boo to lose 3% of its resistance, leading to a residual improvement of around 3% compared to untreated bamboo (according to the studies by W. Schott). Applying the same variation on forged bamboo, the improvement factor between treated bamboo and forged bamboo would then be a factor of 4, after 1 year!

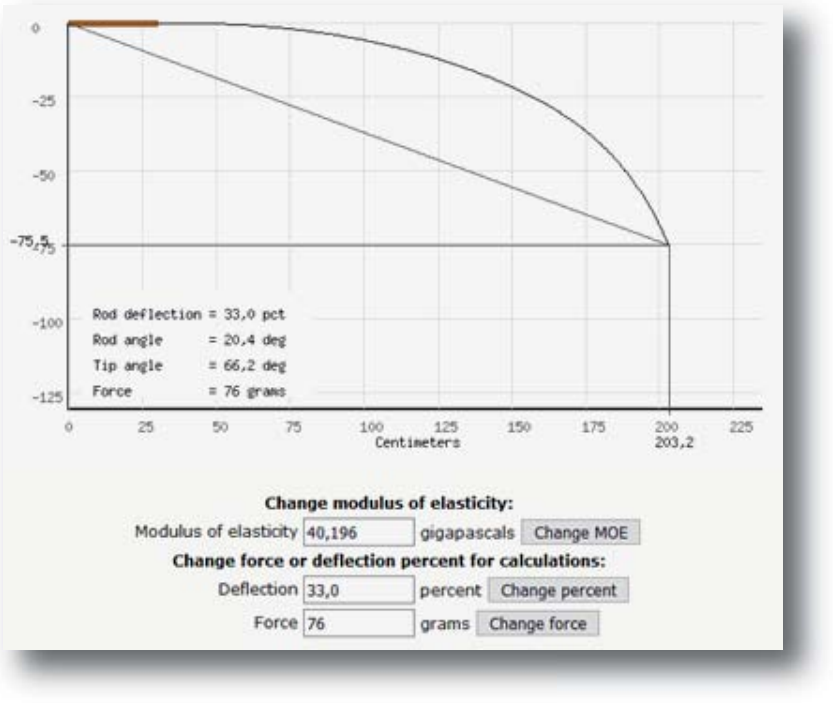


What does this mean for the behaviour of a rod?

In order to measure the effect of a 10% improvement in the modulus of elasticity between a rod with heat treatment and a rod with com-pression, I used the new functionality of the HEXROD software online, allowing to perform deflection calculations, for example by modifying the modulus of elasticity.

The following two graphs show the weight required to bend the rod to a height of one third of its length. Between the graph on the left and the one on the right, I increased the modulus of elasticity by 10% to reflect the improvement made by hot compression over conventional heat treatment. The force required to be applied to the end of the rod corresponds to a weight of 69 g (treated rod) while in the case of a compressed rod, this force becomes 76 g.





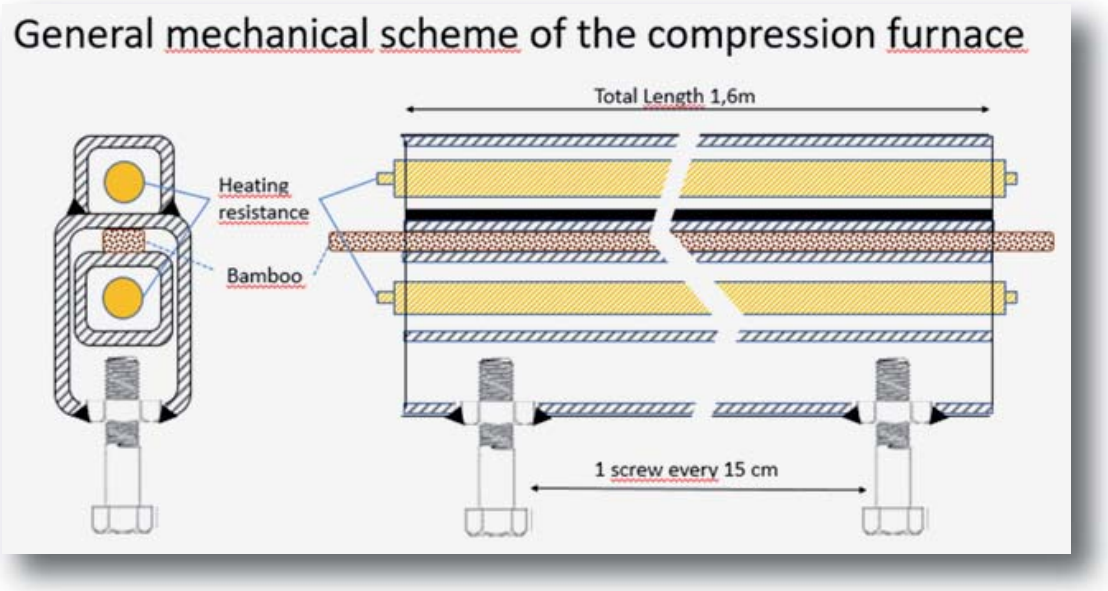
This allows us to assess the impact on the AFTMA line weight corresponding to each rod. Indeed, if we use the “Common Cents System” meth-od developed by Dr W. Hanneman to measure the corresponding line weight, the “with classic treatment” rod corresponds to a 3 weight rod, then that the "compressed / forged" cane corresponds to a 3.5 line. Hot compression therefore saves a half weight of a line with the same taper.

Following these tests, and findings, all that remained was to build a forged bamboo rod!

My little screw press was enough to compress test pieces 80 mm long and 5 mm wide; we had to find an oven concept to compress complete rods 1.5 meters in length and 10mm maximum width!!!

The force applied to the small screw press corresponds to a pressure of 50MPa or 510kg / cm2. A rod having a surface of 150cm2, it was there-fore necessary to find a means capable of exerting a force of 510 * 150 = 76500kg or 76.5 tons, by heating the upper and lower tools to 180 ° C!

After a few unsuccessful attempts, the solution was finally to use a rectangular section tube, inside which a second tube slides, pushed by a series of screws. The general concept is described by the diagram below.



Finally, the time has come to compress and plane the forged bamboo!

I made two identical rods, one forged, the other processed. The forged rod was compressed in the press furnace, the other was processed in the same furnace with the same thermal parameters but simply docking the tools with a very low tightening torque for the screws. Each rod is compressed for a time in the order of 6mm.

- 1 mm of installation (approach of the screws)

- 2 minutes of temperature rise

- Tightening the screws (1/2 turn = 0.5mm) and holding 1mn

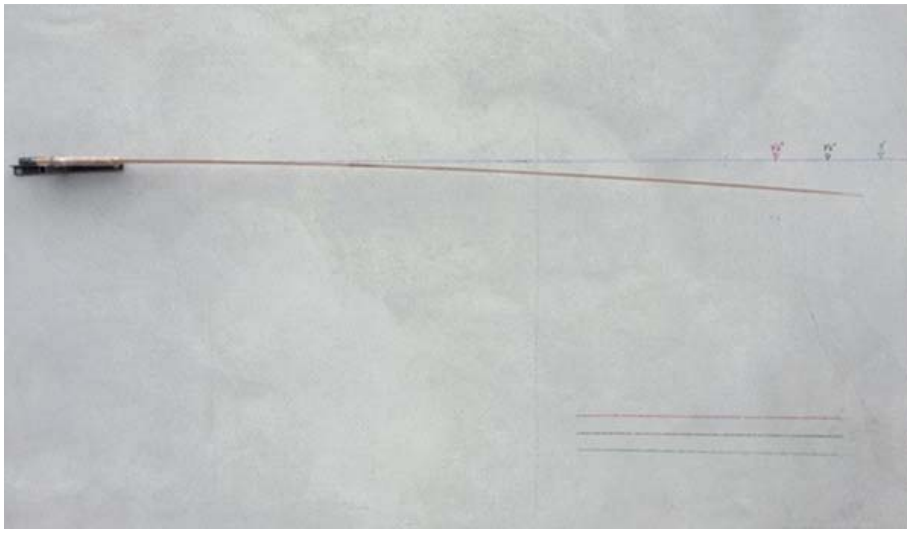
- Tightening the screws (1/2 turn = 0.5mm = and holding 1 min

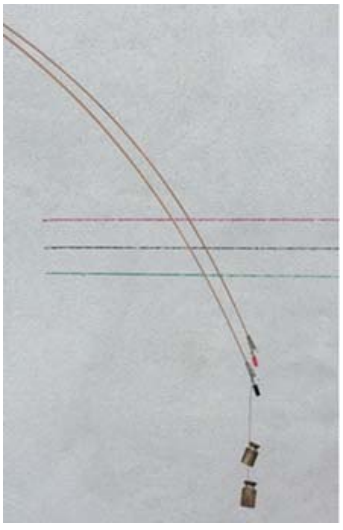
- Loosening / dismantling.

To make 8 strips (the heel and tip of a quadrate rod) this operation takes an hour, including the time to rise to the oven's start-up temperature. This time is to be compared with that necessary to compress the knots, and straighten the strips, then treat with a conventional oven….

I'll let you do the math.

All that remained was to measure the behaviour of the rods in order to check whether the bending simulation made with HEXROD was indeed found. To verify this, the two rods were attached to a stand and a weight of 500g was attached to the end. In the photo on the right, we can see the difference in flexion between the two rods, and in particular the greater rigidity of the forged rod (red clamp) compared to that treated in the conventional way (blue clamp).



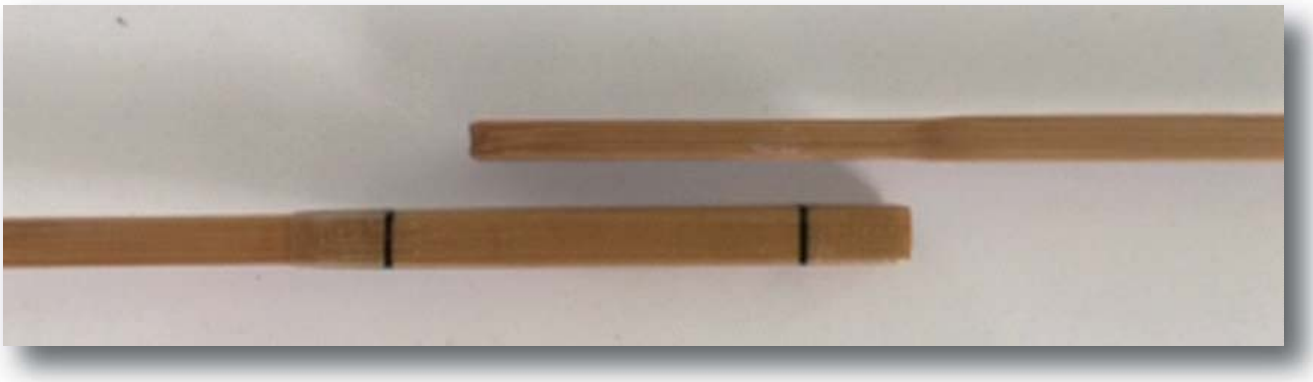


Subsequently, I applied the "Common Cents System" method in order to verify by hooking a weight allowing the rod to bend by a third of its length, and to confirm that the forged rod corresponds to a line weight of 3 while that treated with classic way is of 2.5 weight. This confirms the difference between the two rods observed with the HEXROD calculation (even if the result between calculation and reality differs by half a line weight).

In conclusion, what can we learn from the construction technique of forged bamboo? What are the advantages and disadvantages of such a construction method?

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
- - Forging is 2 times more efficient than conventional heat treatment to improve the flexural strength of bamboo. - - This improvement is further multiplied by 2 (i.e. a factor 4) if we take into account the moisture absorption of the bamboo which cancels out a large part of the effect of the "classic" heat treatment in the months that follow the construction of the cane. - - The improvement made corresponds to a half number of flyline. - - Forging eliminates the need to re-dress knots, which is long, tedious and liable to lead to degradation of the bamboo if it is not done properly. - - Forging, allows to obtain a regular outer surface and does not require any surface planing (which removes very dense and resistant fibres). - - Forging can also be used to deform and stiffen areas of the rod where it is desirable to improve the characteristics of bamboo and in particular in bamboo ferrules. It makes it possible to reduce the extra thickness of the rod in this area by disrupting the behaviour of the rod less (see following image)	- - The manufacture of a compression furnace requires resources and special attention given the very significant forces involved (several tens of tonnes). The mechanical components must be correctly dimensioned. - - The thermal regulation must also be well regulated due to the very high thermal dynamics.

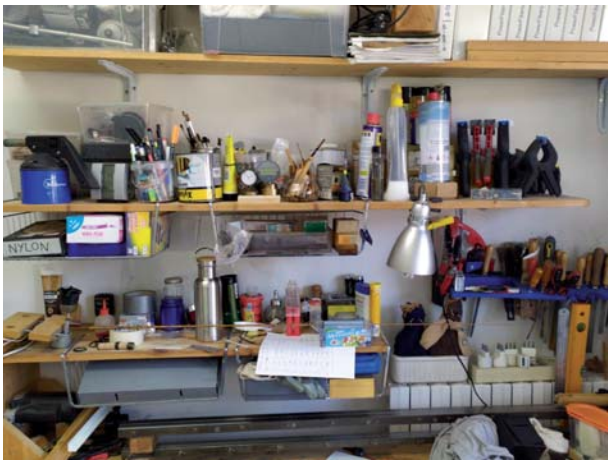
And finally, a view of the forged bamboo ferrule, avoiding changing the taper of this area, outside the length of the ferrule, without removing any external fibre.



So, is forged bamboo an evolution or a revolution?

The art of manufacturing split bamboo rods is a vast world which includes many technical fields (choice of bamboo, choice of tapers, planing method, heat treatment, gluing, type of ferrule, accessories, etc.) or every detail is important. The quality of a rod depends above all on the quality of its production, and therefore on the quality of the rod factor. Forged bamboo is certainly a breakthrough in heat treatment and in the process of building a cane. This technique opens up new possibilities applicable to the manufacture of optimized bamboo shells, it im-pacts the manufacturing method (lightening of node dressing, modification of planing, etc.) but it remains an evolution which will still be tested and developed by all enthusiasts of split bamboo.

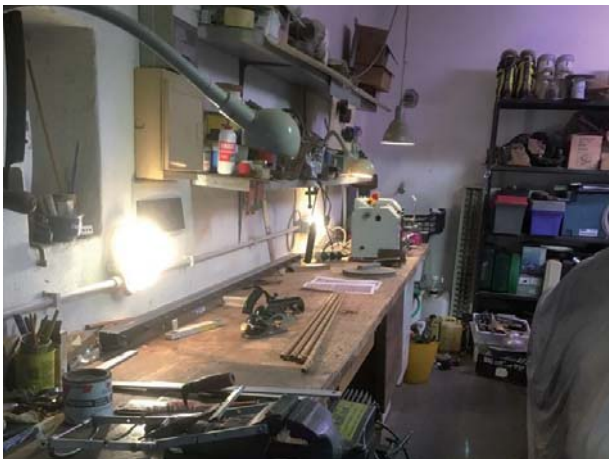
The French version is available in the IBRA website at:
La version française est disponible sur le site Internet de l'IBRA au lien suivant:
https://www.rodmakers.it/articles-tab/



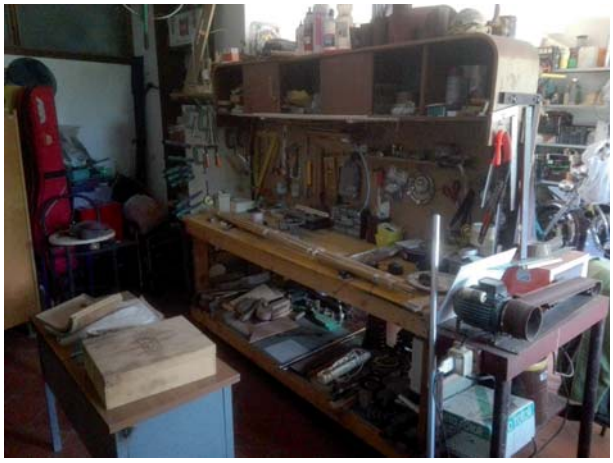
Nicola Bonesini

Marco Boretti

Moreno Borriero



Silvio Bugalla



Francesco Castagnino

Claudio Colli

In the correct measure ... the measure ... is ”correct”

byGiorgio Grondona

In the last two “reflections”, with a personal and (not too, I hope) carefree tone, I told the history of nymph fishing from G.E.M. Skues’s intuitions to the more in-depth (the appropriate term) studies of Frank Sawyer. The intention, as I wrote in closing the reflection in the B.J. nr. 19, is to spread (incentivize?) the use of bamboo rods not strictly tied to dry flies.
As I have already written, the “divinisation” of the dry fly has become (Halford would rejoice) typically Italian, the foreign rodmakers, less fundamentalists in this sense, will forgive us but the late Roberto Pragliola transmitted to us, in part at least, his passion for casting and as those who participate to the gatherings organised by IBRA can ascertain, we cannot wait to try (and show) rods on average between 6’6” and 7’6” with a fast action that allow tight loops and speed in the leader.

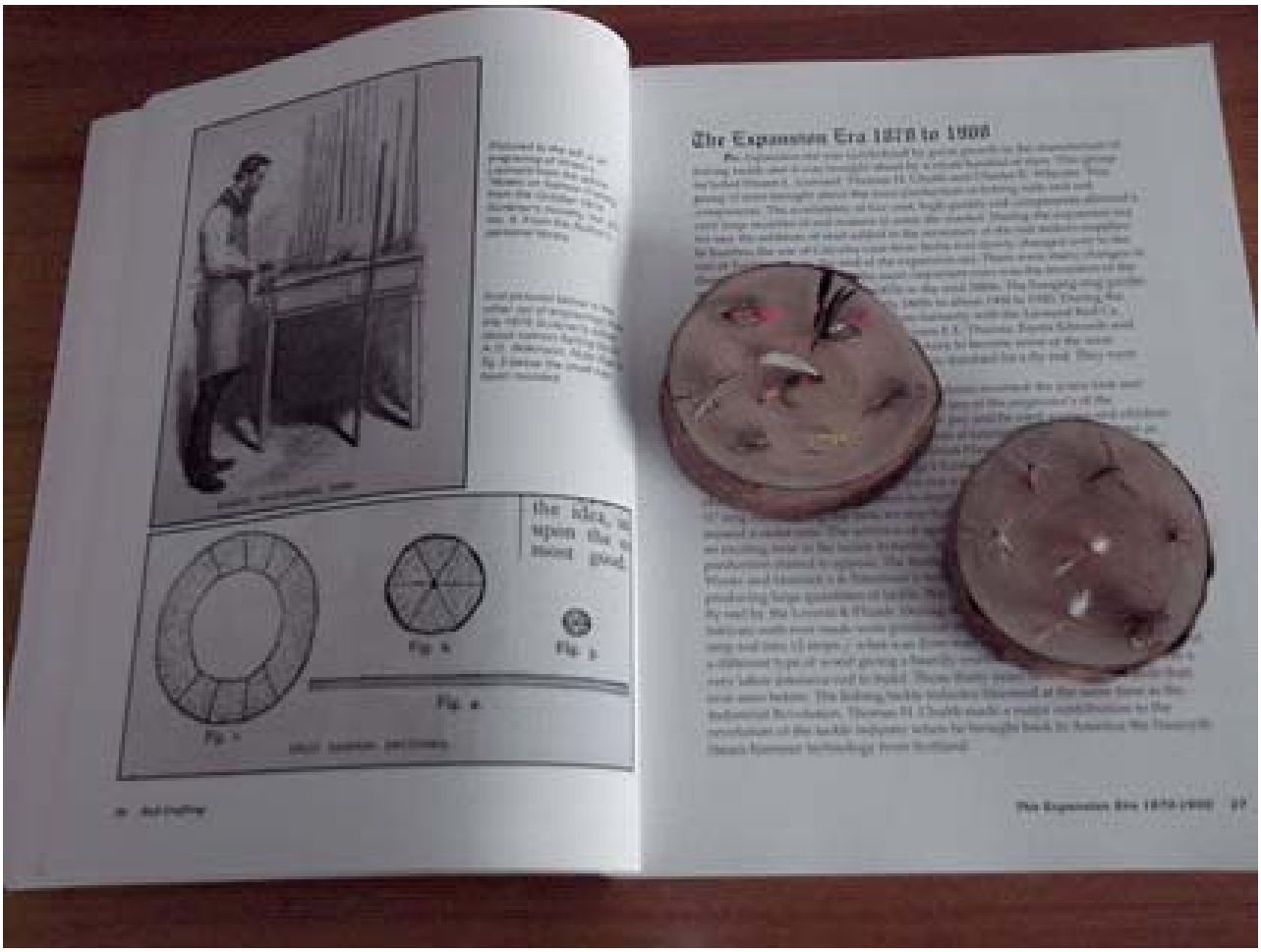
Fortunately, in the last years, interest has grown among several rodmakers in “two-handed” rods. The first ones were introduced by those who addressed salmon and steel-head fishing, now they are joined by rodmakers who frequent local waters with their tools in the search of noble predators.
Dry fly and double-hand... in the middle there is a world, the world of the nymph and wet flies, without rehashing the age-old debate between “on top and under”, I will try to explain how, in my opinion, there should be a rod that allows the use of both techniques (dry and wet/nymph) without sacrificing one or the other.
Among G.E.M. Skues’s fishing companions there was Sir Grimwood Mears who defined the three-piece Leonard 9’0”#6 “the World’s Best Rod”. Frank Sawyer, through Charles Ritz, had Pezon et Michel build the three-piece Parabolic Sawyer Ninph 8’10” #5/6, which, when necessary, he would alternate with another Sawyer Ninph 8’9” #3/4 built by Dermot Wilson.

These are the starting points… or perhaps not, well, not exactly, considering that the length could be the one I prefer from decades of experience in fishing: the two-piece Browning graphilux 9'0"#5/6, my first "all-round" rod was a first generation graphite rod (produced in 1982) weighing little more than 100g. Not exactly as fast as the current graphite rods (more comparable to the glass fibre of the time, only a little less "dancer"), I've always used it with a DT4 in hundreds of fishing outings and … anyway, we are speaking about bamboo and at that time (2010, when I started trying my hand at rodmaking) there was not much choice, my first "long" experience was a replica of a rod I was given built by the Norwegian rodmaker Asbjorn Horgàrd: a two-piece 8'6" #6 (about), a powerful and a little heavy tool, due, in part, to the fittings more aimed at the "yield" than the aesthetics, probably built for fishing sea trout or "difficult" prey. This first experience generated an 8'6", which compared to the original has a bamboo ferrule, substituting the burnished brass ferrules and it was made lighter with the shark tooth system without compensation for the measurement of the taper so that it is suitable to cast a DT4 as well as a WF5.

You're probably thinking it's a wrap, you're happy now and you'll leave us in peace… No, a good donkey is annoying even in the dead of night…so, it's no good, we're cutting a long story short (perhaps), but with the finished rod the fishing trials starts because even if often, too often, we get lost in rivers of words and casts on lawns the rods we make are for … FISHING and considering that fishing, at least since Walton on, has been considered a leisure activity, it must be fun and to be more (and/or better) fun in our case I think that enticing the fish with the aim to catch them should be done with the least possible effort, in terms of physical exertion.

Already fishing becomes an extreme activity when at the end of our fishing outing there is a moment of "food and wine survival" (lunch or dinner), our "athletic" fishing movements must be with a rod that satisfies us …. as much as possible.

Time passes and with the passing of time the days of fishing go by just like the hours spent searching information on our passion for wooden rods, down in the valley where there is space and the fish catch the flies on the surface the "long" rod is fine but in the absence of rises, when submerged fishing is preferable, I'm missing something. It is not only a feeling, but a necessity. I always remember how casually I used to face these moments of fishing with the old Browning, now it should be even easier. Where thirty years ago I used to tie a nymph or a wet fly with 0,18 tippet, now I only need a 0,12 and the imitations pierce the surface with more ease and float more naturally… Indeed, the nylon monofilament has developed greatly through the years, above all in terms of breaking load and abrasion resistance.



Time dedicated to gather information on rodmaking I was saying, today there is a lot online, it is also easier to find books and various publications, even the simple telephone is not bad, we can immediately reach anyone and so I did, I disturbed all the friends and acquaintances I knew had started fly fishing with a bamboo rod…nothing. Many got rid of those rods in favour of carbon, only some kept them but they were rods between 7'6" and 8'6". I would have liked to have something concrete in my hands to try and if it was worth it, to replicate it. It was not so: without much enthusiasm I started looking for a taper from 9'0" to 9'6" and among the many things I happened to read I was struck by the claim of someone who defined a 9'0" # 5 rod built by Vincent C. Marinaro as the easiest to use among the ones he had tested…. You would have run to the computer to verify the data, graphs and measurements...You...but do you remember? I am a donkey, an animal and I act on instinct!!!

In this case, instinct helped me. To be honest, the taper of the rod in question attached to the article, 9'0" #5 in three sections with nickel silver ferrules helped me. My version has bamboo ferrules, this rod too was "born ok" but the idea at the start was to use it mainly for wet fly and nymph fishing, I dared to make a different tip, one that allow me to use a lighter line in order to have more contact with the imitations adrift …
The latest "version" allows me to use a DT3 even if with a DT4 I can, if I decide to, use a floating imitation, and cast with less physical "effort". Anyway, we are speaking about a tool that measures 9'0" and weighs about 130 grams, perhaps one day I will make a hollow version, although solid, it will not be "difficult" to fit a classic or semiautomatic reel.

That is all: I was simply curious to try fishing with a bamboo rod that was not designed only for a dry fly and truthfully I don't think it is as difficult as one might think. Besides, until the middle of the last century the fly rod was usually between 8'6" and 9'6" and subsequently despite the advent of synthetic materials, there was the tendency to build shorter and fast rods.

I think this depends on the fact that various casting "styles" were starting to spread. In the last twenty years fishing competitions have compared different interpretations of nymph fishing, some of which need rods that reach 11'0" and more, definitely prohibitive for our beloved bamboo and frankly to far from the ideas of Skues and Sawyer and all those who did not "settle" for fishing only with a dry fly.

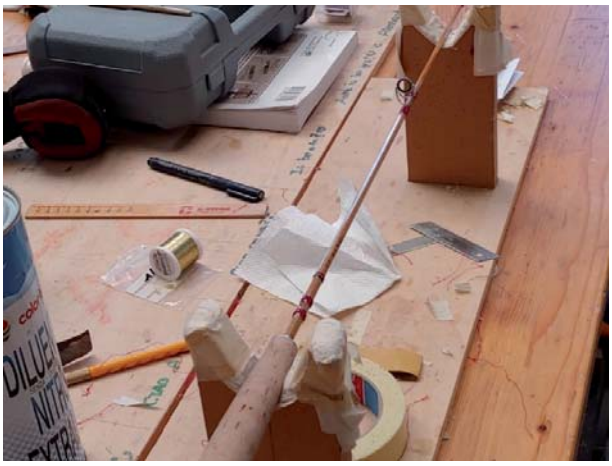
It is 2020, the month of April, in this period Spring starts to wake Nature up, the days are longer, the rising temperatures are favourable for the hatches, or that's how it should be, we hope, there is no way to test it on the river, the Covid 19 pandemic has hit Earth and is (rightly) obliging us to follow the rules the medical experts are giving us. To complete this article my intention was to include some images "on the water", but it's better to stay home!!!

This time more than others I am uneasy, I don't want to speak about any discovery or news, quite simply it is an invitation to not neglect the "range" of sizes that are penalised by the comparison with rods of the same length built with other materials. The History of Fly Fishing is written in thousands of books that deal with the various aspects and components. Many of these books speak about the vital stages of insect life before they become perfect insects and it is in these stages that they are more vulnerable and thus easier prey for the fish that feed on them…why ignore such an opportunity?!!!

If you have had the kindness to read up to this point, perhaps you share my thought; if not, I'm not offended because as always:

"The braying of the donkey does not go to Heaven"

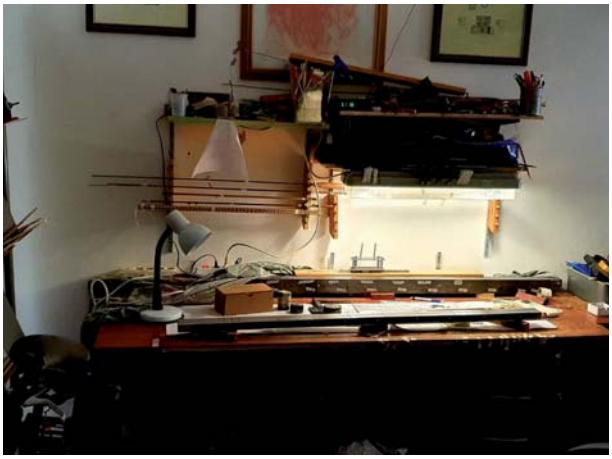
the IBRA exhibition stand in Fiumalbo



Alessandro Da Re

Mario D'Alessandro

Luciano De Feudis



Stefano Eugeni

Oscar Ferri

Davide Fiorani

Out of Africa: the bamboo rods of Stephen Boshoff

Cape Town is about 9000 km from Milan, 12000 if you drive. So far that for many of us it's hard to imagine rivers and streams similar to those we have in our hills and mountains, and that people fish for trouts exactly like we do here in Italy...

I don't know how many IBRA members have had the chance to go to South Africa (in fact we all know at least one...).

I was lucky enough to make a business trip to Cape Town and the Karoo region about 10 years ago for a few days (too few actually). I would like to call this an opportunity because thanks to my work I discovered a beautiful country that left me with a feeling of nostalgia for the beauty of the places, the friendliness of the people..... and for the quality of the wines produced near Cape Town in wonderful farms.

Cape Town is where Stephen Boshoff practice his craft. Stephen is an urban designer and I believe this has had a bearing on the characteristics of his work as a rodmaker (when an architect or urban designer becomes a rodmaker, there is always a particular sign in his creations, don't you believe too?). His "speciality" (at least what many people have discovered browsing the internet, like me) is the smooth integration of the reel into the rod handle, which is not really common in a bamboo rod and holds both aesthetic and functional peculiarities.

Stephen Boshoff was born in Montagu, in the western Cape region of South Africa. Later he moved to George on the southern Cape coast before returning to Somerset West near Cape Town. He has a BA in sociology and a master's in urban and Regional Planning from Stellenbosch University. He also studied at Rutgers University, in the USA. Most of his working life was spent at the City of Cape Town, later as Executive Director of Strategy and Development.

Today he works as a consultant urbanist.

These are some things people say about Stephen Boshoff:

"Such is the quality of his rods that he has a large and devoted following and I've heard from more than a few that once you fish a Boshoff bamboo, you'll never want to fish anything else."
- *PJ Jacobs (Owner and editor: The Complete Fly Fisherman)*

"Such beautiful work! Form and function working so well together."
- *Prof Duncan Brown (Dean Faculty of Arts, UWC)*

"Stephen Boshoff, more than any of his predecessors, has taken the centre axis reel concept a significant step forward, both aesthetically and in terms of casting dynamics … it comes close to being the ultimate small stream fly rod."
- *Ed Herbst (Journalist and Fly-fishing Author/Historian)*

"Stephen's work is understated yet attractive and functional; it hinges entirely on his own uncompromising interpretation of perfection. In this regard he is peerless, truly world class, though you won't find him admitting it."
- *Dr Tom Sutcliffe (Chairman of Mental Health Review Board, Western Cape Government; Former Head, WCG Health; The Red Cross Children's Hospital Trustee; Fly-fishing Author and Artist)*

"Stephen is a gifted craftsman whose rods, nets and other wooden products are of exquisite workmanship. They are not just items that exude aesthetic appeal and soul, but are practical fishing instruments of heirloom quality."
- *Peter Brigg (Artist and Fly-fishing Author)*

"Stephen is an artist as creative as he is inventive, a man who continually pushes the boundaries in all fields from net making to his exquisitely crafted, graceful and elegant split cane rods. For me he and his rods are world class South African treasures."
- *Sharland Urquhart (Artist and Gardener)*

"If bamboo fly rods get any better, I'll be surprised."
- *Ian Cox (Lawyer)*

"There is lot going on in the South African fly fishing community, which is very definitely worth paying close attention to … From this fertile environment comes Stephen Boshoff's centre axis fly rod concept. His rods are superbly crafted, functional and highly sought after. What works in South Africa, should work elsewhere and these very special rods should be of interest to anyone who (like me) is a lover of small stream fly fishing."
- *Mark Leggett (Owner, Alternative Tackle)*

"Stephen Boshoff's cane rods are more than tools, they are works of art. One strongly suspects that these rods will become heirlooms in time, handed down from generation to generation and lovingly discussed in hushed tones by those with an appreciation for true quality."
- *Tim Rolston (South African Fly Fishing Team Member, World Championship Competitor, Fly Fishing Author, Journalist, and REFFIS accredited Fly Fishing Casting Instructor and Guide)*

"When I think about Stephen's craft, it is the whole rather than the sum of the parts which jumps into my mind. Whether a rod, net or whatever, it feels like it belongs and was always there."
- *Clement Booth (Former Member of the Board of Management, Allianz SE; Director of Saracens; Fly Fisher)*

When I got in touch with Stephen to arrange an interview for the Bamboo Journal (thanks to Moreno, here pictured with him at the Johannesburg Fly Fishing Expo in 2017) I just asked him to speak freely about himself and about his long time relationship with bamboo and fly fishing.

This is the story he tells us.

I offer bespoke handmade bamboo (some refer to "cane") fly rods from a workshop in Scarborough, a small conservation village 50 km south of Cape Town, adjoining South Africa's Cape of Good Hope National Park. Because of my love for small, predominantly freestone mountain streams, I have a special affinity with small rods, ranging from five to seven and a half feet in length casting line weights two to five. They are "get down low behind a rock and cast" kind of rods. They must excel at pin-point casting close-in and up to ten or fifteen meters. They must roll-cast well.

Finishing a rod leaves me spent, physically and emotionally: the intense concentration, and sometimes the fear, is very tiring. I would never start a new rod immediately upon finishing another. To counter bamboo burn-out, I'll engage in making other things then; a net, fishing basket or fly box. These take time, and should not compete with making rods. But, they serve an important purpose; they refresh and prepare me for the next rod.

The “centre axis” configuration in bamboo rods, where the reel is permanently mounted on the rod as part of an integrated moulded wooden reel/grip connection, is my own design. Small rods configured as a centre-axis truly have a unique balance, very different from conventional rods.

Working by hand (I only plane by hand), my output is low: at most some ten rods annually. Current delivery times are five months from date of order.

The “surround” of bamboo is rich and special. It includes the context for growing, harvesting and distribution, the history of rod making, and the individuals involved. Every so often I re-watch David James Duncan’s remarkable film – Trout Grass – documenting the transformation of bamboo, from harvesting in southern China, its transport to the Bamboo Broker in Seattle, and distribution world-wide to rod makers, some located far away or remotely. It serves as a reminder when – in my world as an urbanist – I think that my craft is senseless, that nothing is more sensible. Perhaps the feel of a bamboo rod well-made is the common voice of the different hands, across continents, helping it into being.

In bamboo rod making, I am fascinated by the history of the craft; the people involved past and present; and the journey of transformation of each culm from its growing – through many hands – to my work bench and the user.

I grew up in a family, where on Sunday no one fished; you went to church and Sunday school, and for that you wore your best, at time hand made by mom.

I soon found more solace in the sermons of streams. Perhaps I started making rods as a boy to continue putting my best foot forward, and looking for forgiveness because I broke the family tradition.

Somehow, I still hold onto this belief; putting the best foot forward. And this doesn’t mean now, as in Sundays past, making the most expensive, but rather creating something tailor-made and unique. To the stream I bring the best my mind and hands can offer. Working at the bench I’m happy and never far removed from the small stream dreams of my clients.

A bamboo rod well made by hand, beautiful in form and function, carries a load of mystery; mystery locked in the extraordinary properties of natural materials, but also the methods of rod-making, still developing to this day. Then there is the crazy mystery of the maker himself; the mystery of someone wanting to spend so much time just to make the perfect fishing pole. All this mystery is not far removed from the mystery of trout themselves or from why we engage so enthusiastically and so tirelessly in trying to catch them in the first place. I am often reminded of the words of D.H. Lawrence: "Things men have made with wakened hands and put soft life into are awake through years with transferred touch, and go on glowing for long years."

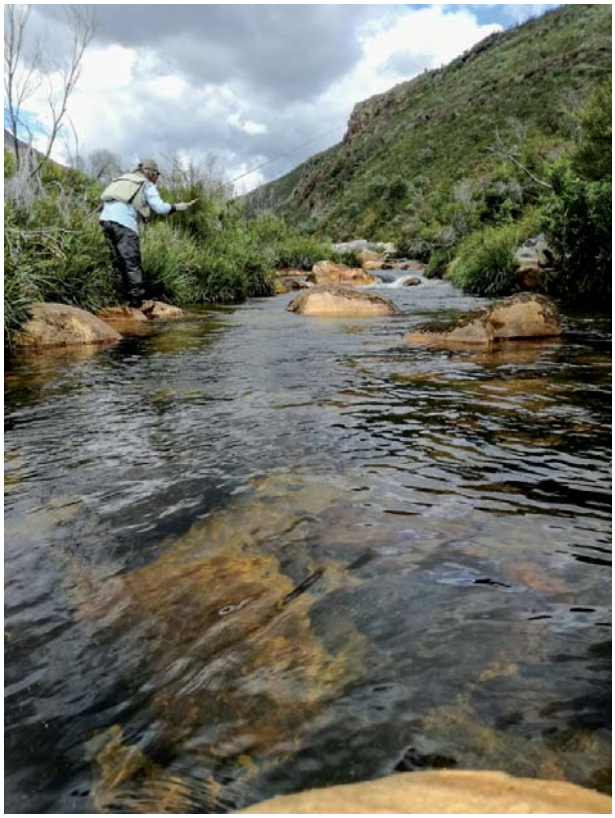
Each bamboo rod carries so much of the maker's weight I am surprised that they are of any use.

As I grow older, other reasons for making rods become clearer. In a world where we often lack control, the future of ideas is dependent on the discretion and whim of others, as well as ruthless competition; the workshop offers total control, and no excuses for failure.

Making rods in South Africa, carries particular challenges. It is costly to import materials, both because of distance and exchange rate. Price is an issue. This despite the quality of work produced locally. SA bamboo rods sell for a fraction of comparable rods overseas. Because of user perceptions of 'price-quality' relationships, this costs us dearly. Nevertheless, there is a commitment to keep rods affordable to local fly fishers who chooses to use bamboo.

My start in fly fishing

My fly fishing origins are not conventional. I grew up in the largely trout-less southern coastal region of South Africa, and spent most week-ends on the family farm in an area an hour or so inland called the Little Karoo, a more arid climatic region, known for ostrich farming.



My late father was a salt water fisherman, casting bait along treacherous rocky shores for South Africa's national fish, the galjoen, and other local fishes like white steenbras and black musselcracker. Occasionally, he used flat metal spoons for elf (also known as shad locally and bluefish elsewhere).

I accompanied him and his friends on fishing trips often from the age of six or so, targeting quieter gullies for bait-fish and blacktail, a ferocious little fighter and one of the most commonly caught fish species found around our rocky areas. In its simplicity, the method used was akin to tenkara: "dip" rods – a simple Indian cane pole of 12' or so – a length of monofilament tied to the tip, a light sliding ball sinker and baited hook. Fishing this way allowed the adults peace and maximum fishing time while boys had ample enjoyment. We were restricted to safe gullies, provided bait to adults, and did not cause overruns for them to undo (Penn multipliers, and specifically the narrow-spooled Penn 49 was a local favourite). Also, bait fish were plentiful, so we learnt to fish by catching ample and never got bored to the extent of pleading with the adults to return us home.

It was on the farm that I first met trout. The farm-house had an enormous dining room, with a huge dining table as the centre piece, surrounded by open shelves, covered with newsprint cut to zig-zag edges. The shelves housed my grandmother's crockery, as well as home-made preserves, biscuits, and other baked goods in a variety of jars and tins. I clearly remember one round cake tin. The lid had an artist's image of a boy on stream with a cane pole, float, and his catch: a smallish speckled fish, quite unlike the ones we caught from shore. To me, the little fish was simply beautiful. Grandma's encyclopaedia revealed its name: rainbow trout. So, the desire to catch one was established.

It was only some six years later, when my dad took up a teaching post closer to Cape Town that I started fly fishing. A famed trout stream ran through the Somerset West; and a school friend introduced me to fishing with a fly. I think it took me a season or so to land my first trout on a fly (a Coch-Y-Bondhu). Post school, while studying at the nearby Stellenbosch University, fishing the locally celebrated Eerste River competed for time attending lectures.

My rod of choice by now was an old 7-foot bamboo of English origin with a bad set which Mr. Harrison from the Cape Piscatorial Society dug from a cupboard and sold to me for the equivalent of less than one Euro. My reel was a Hardy Perfect that my dad bought from a widow in Somerset West. This outfit, together with a tweed jacket from a secondhand shop, I thought, fitted the young sociologist in me and probably tried to emulate Neil Patterson's style.

My first decent rod was a Sage 8'6" 6# in glass, which I bought for some five Euros with the takings of working a university holiday at the City of Cape Town (I still regret not taking the shorter 4#).

My father's greatest gift to me was probably his trust. From an early age, I enjoyed complete access to his workshop and tools, including the lathe. Albeit a teacher and later school principal, he never forced me to work. His priority for me was to play, firmly believing that I would find something worthwhile in work after days of boyhood. He also instilled a deep respect for nature and all things living, past and present.

I always fiddled with tackle. As a boy, I often dismantled a little Penn Beachmaster to my dad's dismay. I could never get the clutch spring back without his assistance.

At school I continuously refurbished rods of all kinds, including perfectly fishable ones. My bamboo rod making started much later in the 1990s when I came upon a few culms in a furniture factory in Cape Town. My current stock of Tonkin was imported by from the late Andy Royer in Seattle.

My home waters and its trouts

My local streams are situated in the mountains surrounding Cape Town. The Cape region is home to the smallest but most bio-diverse of the world's six floral kingdoms, the Cape Floral Kingdom. With more plant species than the whole of Europe, the kingdom is one of the area's two Unesco World Heritage Sites, places of "outstanding value to humanity" (the other is Robben Island visible from the central city, used for centuries as a prison and home to South African statesman Nelson Mandela for most of his 27 years of incarceration).

Mountains of the area also harbour endangered mountain leopards, and is home to water mongoose, the chacma baboon, Cape otters, klipspringer buck, and numerous bird species.

Hiking and fishing, one needs to be careful crossing paths with the resident puff adder or Cape cobra, local venomous snakes. Paths up the valleys are generally quite rough and undefined. Freestone, crystal clear streams with pale sandstone cobbled beds, and good populations of wild bred rainbow and brown trout, are the norm.

As early as 1867, the Cape Government passed an Act supporting the introduction of fish to waters of the Colony "not native to such waters". After a number of failed attempts to introduce trout to the Cape, the Western Districts Game Protection Association was formed, working to convince government to finance further importation of trout lava. Ova from Britain (Loch Leven and Andrews of Guildford) were eventually successfully hatched in Newlands (a suburb in Cape Town) and later in 1893 at the government-established Jonkershoek hatchery on the Eerste River at Stellenbosch (a university town some 50 kilometres from Cape Town). In 1931, the original association, now called the Western Districts Game and Trout Protection Association, was reconstituted as the Cape Piscatorial Society.

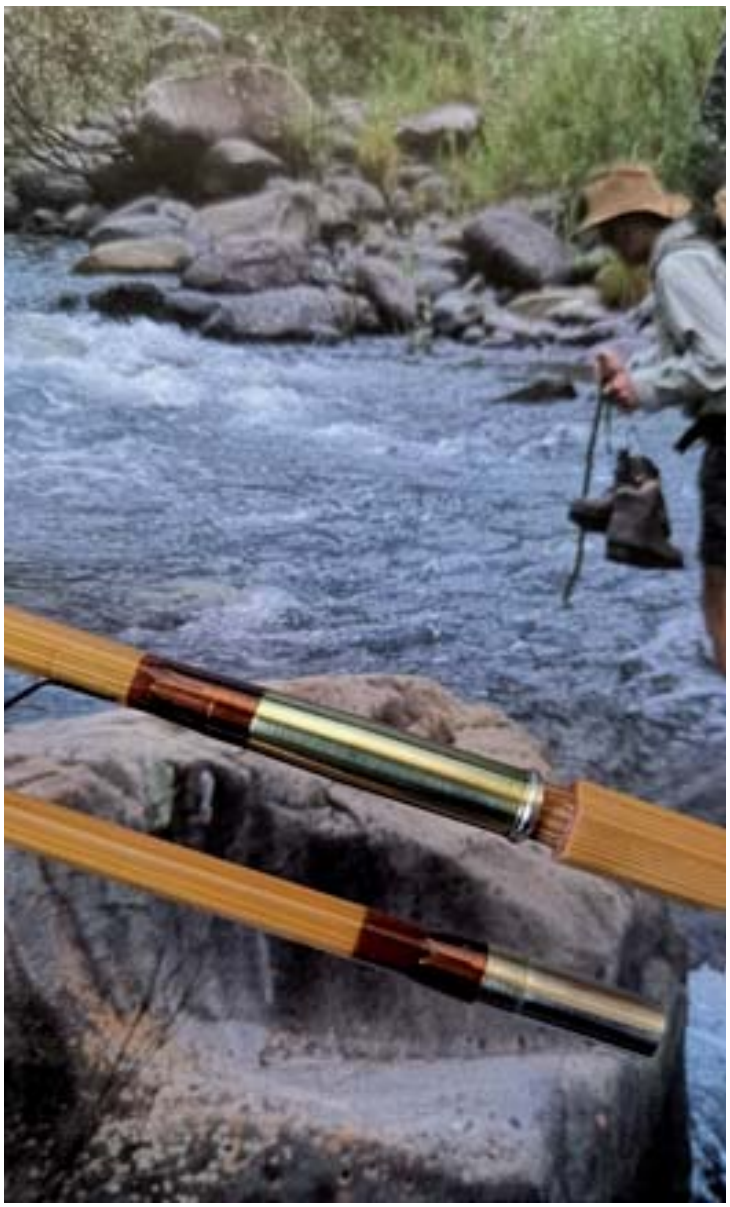
Since then, the Society has worked to promote trout and fly fishing in the Cape. Members contributed enormously to the evolution of local stream-craft, tackle and fly tying. The Society's printed journal Piscator – always eagerly by awaited by members – appeared bi-annually from 1947 for some 65 years, when it was decided to publish the journal online. Past and present office bearers of the CPS like Arthur Cecil Harrison, Tony Biggs, Tom Sutcliffe, and Ed Herbst are household names in the South African fly-fishing community.

The CPS administers stream fishing in the Cape on behalf of Cape Nature, the provincial conservation authority. Fishing is strictly controlled and must be booked in advance. Day tickets are available to both members and non-members, while members benefit from season permits. Ideally placed to monitor the ecologically sensitive mountain catchment areas where its membership fish, the Society has made a significant contribution to conservation over the years.

Our streams do not have significant hatches of mayfly or caddis, but the net-winged midge and black fly hatch in substantial numbers. Sight fishing - to predominantly rainbow trout between 12" and 14" – is the preferred approach. No stocking occurs, and together with catch and release regulations, this has led to technically demanding fishing. Refusals on these streams are probably more the result of bad presentation than poor fly choice.

Although our region and streams is a place of extraordinary natural richness and beauty, this environment is under constant threat. Cape Town – currently a city of four million – is still growing rapidly, and urban and leisure development threatens wilderness areas. Within a competitive global economy, and perennial water shortages, farming competes for water. Many citizens struggle to find work and live under abject poverty. Crime is a problem, and some wilderness areas are not completely safe from criminals or the desperate.

Nevertheless, many are trying their best to improve the region, to protect and expand our resources. This includes compacting the city to prevent sprawl, employing environmentally conscious approaches to urban management, and finding ways for ordinary people to make a dignified living. It is our home, and we need to find balance, now and into the future. It is best not to fish alone. Even without the fear of crime, our mountain terrain remains treacherous



In recent times, the Cape Piscatorial Society's challenge has changed somewhat. In a turn-around from the time of the first introduction of trout, the future of trout in South Africa is under continuous discussion today. Being a relatively new democracy, with statute in sync with current worldviews and beliefs on many issues, there is a concerted drive from some environmentalists to eradicate the non-indigenous trout. More than 20 years post democracy, we still tussle and deliberate about who and what is justly here to stay as part of our culture and future.

A recent book by Prof Duncan Brown of the University of the Western Cape (Are trout South African?), engages this struggle, using the classification of trout as alien and undesirable as a metaphor for deeper questions that plague our society. In the process he makes a significant contribution to understanding what constitutes indigeneity, authenticity and the right to belong or be part of South Africa (or other locales and communities) today.

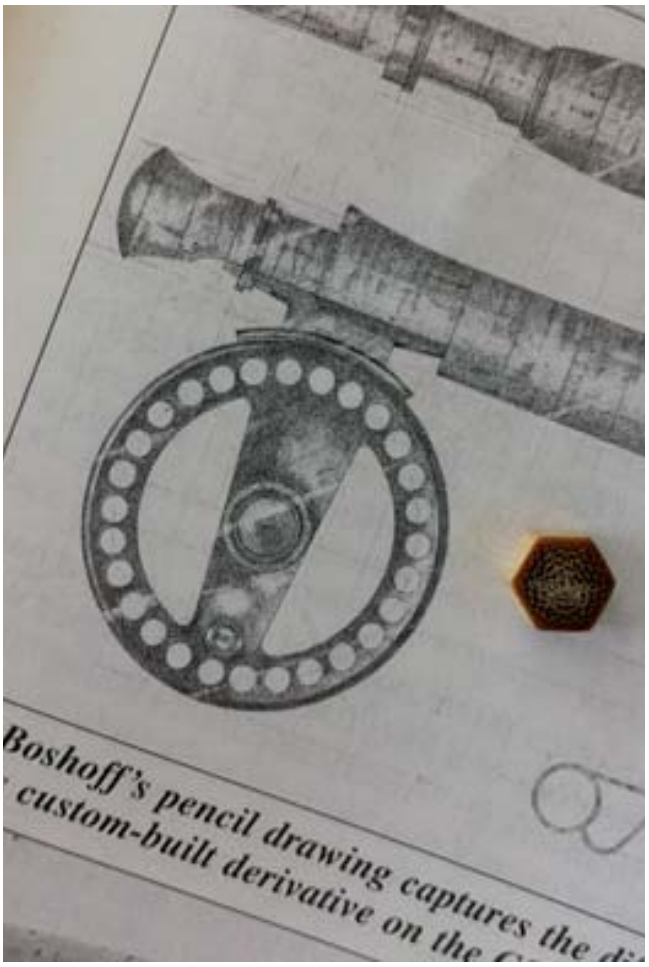
My fishing

Most of my fishing occurs (using conventional and tenkara gear) within one or two hours driving from Cape Town. I used to fish frequently with Ed Herbst, the current President of the CPS. Prior to retirement Ed was a national television news journalist/ reporter, and South Africa's high priest on matters and tackle related to light and ultra-light fly-fishing. Although a debilitating illness has kept Ed off the streams, he continues to research and explore new developments; specifically, small stream fly patterns (he is the only person I know that has worn out a Renzetti Presentation – with the push-cam, reverse jaw mechanism – through tying!). Unfortunately, Ed has never taken to tenkara, primarily I believe, because he stopped actively hunting trout on our mountain streams prior to the growth of tenkara outside of Japan.

Over the last few years I fish with close friends Craig Thom, Nico Claase, and Brian Maartens in Cape Town, and during annual trips – work permitting – with Peter Brigg trekking and camping in the Drakensberg (the name given to the eastern portion of the Great Escarpment which encloses the Southern African plateau), and certified IFFF casting instructor and guide Tim Rolston for indigenous yellowfish on the Orange River (in inland desert country on the border with Namibia). On streams for trout, I prefer the dry fly, and typical South African interpretations of Variant style flies.

However, I do not fish enough. The price you pay being a part-time craftsperson is less time on the water. Few realise that apart from those in full time fly-fishing employment, home craftspeople probably spent more time "fishing" at their benches than most on the water.

My fishing experience outside of South Africa is very limited. I spent almost a year in the US on a Fullbright related fellowship in urban planning and management, but the study limited fishing time. In southern England, I fished a minor chalk stream and also fished little known small streams in New Zealand during a visit to old friends. Unlike many of my peers I have no desire to hunt Jurassic trout, salmon, or salt water species in exotic locations.



The palm grip and centre-axis rods

My work is an honest attempt to continually improve on tradition and knowledge. I do respect tradition – specifically aspects of wilderness in fly-fishing, and the dedication of craftspeople – but not necessarily all traditional ways of doing. In that sense it saddens me if people copy the work of others blindly. I think one should copy to understand technique and purpose, but ultimately my hope is for younger craftspeople to advance knowledge, to progress craft and beauty.

My first exploration in improving rod design was the "palm" rod grip; a response to Gary Borger advocating a hand positioned somewhat over the fly reel for better balance. It had an up-locking reel seat and a reverse half-Wells handle made entirely of cork. The front reel seat was hooded within the cork grip. A shelf of cork extended along the top of the handle almost to the butt so that the transition from the handle to reel seat did not involve the abrupt gap which conventional, mass-produced fly rod handles have between the back of the cork handle and the wooden reel seat.

The centre-axis advances the principle of balance significantly. It is not gimmicky or intended to be radical, but a continuation of the search for balance in rod and reel. In use it feels very different. One really gets the sense of "oneness" in rod and reel. The reel sits flush against the junction of the hand and wrist facilitating the "squeeze cast" developed by Joe Humphries for fishing dry flies in tight brush. Further work on this design continues, including provision for changing reels.

To me, tenkara – being "emergent" – offers interesting challenges for craft. It is in a way less constrained than crafting tools for "normal" fly-fishing. It is as if much is open to be thought about, invented, and discovered. This includes simple matters; how to make your line, store it, and carry on-stream essentials.

At the same time, all of this happens within tight constraints – the limited confines of a reel-less rod, line, and fly – and generally enables use of very simple, readily available materials. In other words, the context for a tenkara-focused craftsperson is interesting: you work in a relatively open environment, can use simple materials, yet remain constrained by the limited gear inherent to the technique. The cost of importing components also favour making tenkara equipment – everything on a rod could be made locally.

The kind of gear I make is ever expanding. Originally, I focused on rods but I find it difficult to begin work on a new rod immediately after finishing another. It is as if completing a rod leaves me exhausted. Therefore, the work on nets, boxes and other things; they provide some relief and recovery. My long handled tenkara net tries to overcome issues with landing fish with the traditional short net while using a long rod (the long-handled net can be carried behind the back as per normal with shorter nets).

My veneered fly boxes ensure a very thin walled, light-weight box, unlike wood boxes made with the aid of a router. The design principles of the box have been taken further in my wood chest box. The fish boxes or biku that I make learns from the traditional Japanese creel, but is generally simpler as the main basket is used for storing gear as opposed to fish (in a context of practicing catch and release).

At the same time, making other things brings me closer to a point where everything I use on-stream will be handmade, and if not by me, by friends. Somehow the specialness of trout and streams deserve the effort and dedication of handmade tools.

Who and what provides inspiration

Being from relatively isolated South Africa – and starting to make rods in the pre-internet days – I had to learn through doing without the aid of studying fine examples in rods, a mentor, or extensive written material.

Given our predominantly British colonial history most old rods found here would be Allcocks, Millwards, or Hardys of the three-piece 8' to 8'6" kind, fairly heavy and with so-called "wet-fly" actions. I never had the opportunity to study or fish a vintage or modern small stream bamboo rod – in the 6' to 7' range – made outside of South Africa.

My late father provided much inspiration and example. He started his career as a woodwork teacher and maintained a home workshop, making or restoring most of our furniture, using hand tools. My brother and I had relative freedom to the workshop from a very young age. I also accompanied my dad on his trips fishing, albeit casting bait in the salt. So, woodwork and fishing comprise some of my earliest and happiest memories as a child, and both have remained consistent activities in my life. The two pursuits merge in the tackle that I make. Aspects of the two – fine handwork in predominantly wood, small things, and tiny freestone streams in high mountains – largely determine the range of things I make; small and light-weight bamboo rods, wood boxes, creels, packs, and so on.

Work that inspires me today is not strictly that of fly fishing tackle makers, but writers, art and craftspeople generally. I always return to the work of the late James Krenov, the Swedish American cabinet-maker and founder of the College of the Redwoods Fine Furniture Program (his books include A Cabinetmakers Notebook, With Wakened Hands, The Fine Art of Cabinetmaking, Worker in Wood, and The Impractical Cabinetmaker).

His words and practice support perseverance in working on one's own, believing in your work, resisting fads or the latest "market" trends, using simple hand tools, and work "unfolding" in its own time, and the intuitive approach (it is said that he never worked with detailed drawings, preferring a rough idea, and starting with one part – for example the doors of a cabinet – gradually developing the rest of the piece around it through testing and refinement).

His message to students in 1997 is relevant to rod-makers and users of handmade tackle: "We hope that … [you will] … come to realize that if one cares enough, if one pays enough attention to the richness of wood, to the tools, to the marvel of one's own hands and eye, all these things come together so that a person's work becomes that person; that person's message. In this work, in these details, in these elements, something of a person is included. Their fingerprints or their sense of proportion, line, and detail are there; and what you're experiencing is something very personal from each of these people: something that they've put their heart and soul into."

My most prized workshop tool is a small wood smoothing plane made by Mr Krenov for me when he was at an advanced age (and his eye sight failing). The body of the plane is somewhat rough in its finish, with edges rounded with a gouging chisel. It speaks of extraordinary confidence in its making, knowledge of what the tool is expected to do, beauty in its "partial" finish, and fits perfectly in the hand. Once finely tuned, it surpasses all metal bodied planes that I have used in performance.

Among the writers there is the late Harry Middleton (author of among others The Earth is Enough, On the Spine of Time, and The Bright Country), our own Tom Sutcliffe (specifically Trout Hunting and Shadows on the Streambed), James R Babb (author of River Music: A Fly Fisher's Four Seasons, Fly-Fishin' Fool: The Adventures, Misadventures, and Outright Idiocies of a Compulsive Angler, and Crosscurrents: A Fly Fisher's Progress), and Chris Yates, former holder of the record for the heaviest-recorded British carp (specifically How to Fish, and Out of the Blue). All these writers – to my mind – explore our pursuit as a way of life, making sense, and finding a place in the world equal to all other creatures.

In bamboo rods, the work of the late Tom Moran inspires. His attention to detail was special. I admire rod makers Per Brandin, Mario Wojnicki, and Bjarn Fries for the simplicity of their work (although I have never seen one of their rods).

I also admire Alberto Poratelli who appears to have an extremely professional approach to rod-making. Photos I have seen of his workshop shows an architect's approach to the craft. Alberto reminds us that our craft is legitimate work, requiring the same integrity in planning and execution as a building or fine piece of furniture. In work on tapers, I am fond of the less-known work done by Tom Smithwick, and find Chris Carlin's refinement of classic tapers very well considered.

For the last number of years, I have followed the work of some Japanese rod makers on the internet, suspecting that they are among the leaders of modern bamboo rod craft.

But, there is much to learn from all the "great" makers. Each left specific "fingerprints" in their work, their approach to specific tasks. All lived relatively simple lives, often struggled to make ends meet, but burned with passion for the craft and making better rods. The life of a bamboo rod maker seldom unfurls as graciously as a line from one of his or her rods.

In South Africa, vise maker Jay Smit is the "elder" of fly-fishing craft. He has achieved much; what amounted to him fundamentally rethinking aspects of fly-tying tools in the J-vice are now regarded as common-place.

I follow your Italian Bamboo Journal. For me – and surely many around the world – every issue is awaited with excitement. It must now rate as the best journal of its kind in the world.

The makers of the Richardson Chest Box have always inspired me. I had one made to order some ten years ago. It is the smaller "ultra-lite" version, with two-trays and epoxied green. I engage with this little box continuously, customising it to serve my needs, changing the inside and adding outside attachments. I think the chest box has specific advantages on stream, acting as a small work surface with both hands free.

I also follow the work of "cottage-industry" manufacturers of ultra-light hiking equipment. Their challenging of existing ways of doing inspire me. Many individuals are setting lofty standards, in that way motivating others – including me – to do better.

Working as an urban planner/ designer in the public sector, trout craft is very important in my life. In my work, one is confronted with many agendas daily; each settlement has a "thousand designers", holding to different views, and ideal urban outcomes pursued are often subject to enormous compromise. Doing my craft is the antithesis of public sector urban planning. I work on my own. Success and failure is entirely mine; a relatively simple, manageable context. It helps me to retain self-belief and dignity. At the same time, belief is continuously rekindled.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes sums up the role of craft in Women Who Run with the Wolves (probably compulsory reading for men):

"The craft of questions, the craft of stories, the craft of the hands – all these are the making of something, and that something is soul. Anytime we feed soul, it guarantees increase"

Views on craft

As a rod maker, I have little time for poor workmanship. I believe that a good rod exhibits excellence in different dimensions: good source material, its matching to purpose, careful lay-out and planing, and excellent fitting of components and finish. At the same time, I admire anyone who just perseveres in making a bamboo rod from a raw culm.

I dislike copying. We should study and practice the technique and ways of work of others, not to copy, but rather to improve. If one thing disappoints, it is someone copying poorly something I have developed, without understanding the underlying rationale.

I have never understood why I stress so much signing a rod (or the master cabinet maker Krenov reluctantly 'signed' a cabinet). After 80 hours of toil this should be a walk in the park. Yet, I defer, I redo 30 times, I sweat. I have tried pencil to reduce impact. Edmund de Waal (The Hare with Amber Eyes) suggests why: 'that moment of ownership when it [is] finished and let go.'

My workshop and tools

My workshop reflects a minimalist sensibility, in how to build and make space. Some will say that the workshop and house have Japanese qualities. It hugs the land that it sits on – protecting it from the severe weather that typifies the area close to Cape Point. It is modest, built from light materials, providing shelter from nature and my work as opposed to dominating it.

The workshop's quality of natural light is extraordinary. At times it has an almost amber glow as light falls on wooden surfaces. From my planing bench, I can see the sea in the distance. Immediately outside, an olive tree which I planted when the house was built 14 years ago is maturing, and birds find it an appropriate resting and nesting place. The tree portrays the maturing of the house, and my work.

The workshop is minimalist in its contents. My tools are few, and mostly unpowered. Some are old, handed down by my father, although I do have some modern block planes and Japanese hand saws. I think the whole workshop is "emergent" – still developing – embodying an ongoing search for less and an "unplugged" working environment – where most work is done with hand tools in an environment devoid of dust and noise.

Fishing bamboo

A well-made bamboo rod has a special feel. Generally, they are slower and gentler than graphite rods, and specifically graphite rods made recently. But the feel is becoming less relevant. Many bamboo makers have made very fast rods, and some modern glass rods approach the feel of traditional bamboo. So, the ongoing specialness of bamboo lies elsewhere. To me it is in many things. There is the tradition, being part of an old craft, which is still developing. There is also the material – and specifically Arundinaria amabilis, "the lovely bamboo" – itself, and its "transformation" journey, from its growing and harvesting in a small area northwest of Canton, China, to the workbenches of a makers and the users of rods in many parts of the world.

Personally, I prefer to engage with nature – and especially the small streams in Cape kloofs – with things made by hand. I also think that people are becoming increasingly aware of the wastage and destruction associated with the manufacture of much of what we use. A bamboo rod, in some ways, adds to engaging with streams and nature "lightly".
It would be totally untruthful to proclaim that one of my rods – or bamboo generally – gives an edge functionally on stream, to anyone, or myself. The appeal is holistic; the joy of engaging with nature with a rod and other bits of tackle made with my hands, and largely made from natural materials.

What sets my rods apart?

I think that increasingly those in the know will recognise my rods among others as having a specific integrity, a specific wholeness. They cast well, and without effort. Then, they are extremely well finished. They are spartan. They do not carry special wraps or heat treatment patterns which do not add to a rod's functionality. Each embodies care in making. Nothing is hidden. The inside of the rod, the fit of sections not visible after gluing, the finished tabs of ferrules and guide feet covered in silk, is as carefully executed as the rod's external skin, its varnishing. Aesthetically, components and wraps are always subservient to the rod blank itself. Functionally, in design and dimensions, the components provide no more than is necessary to perform its intended function.

Some of my rods – especially the centre axis – may appear strange, a departure from the norm. Yet, in use, and albeit you will see few of them around, a user may think "why are other small stream rods not made this way?" These rods, and details on others, illustrate a conscious attempt to develop the craft further, notwithstanding in ways not easily discernible.

A good rod: It should do what it is made for well, whether that is casting short on a tiny mountain stream or laying out a full line with no back-cast for bonefish. In its making, the rod should embody harmony in its parts; the whole should be bigger than the parts. The blank is the core; components should not draw away from or dominate the blank. Each part should be finished flawlessly; there should be no glue joints where strips meet, no teardrops in varnish, guide feet and ferrule serrations should be perfectly finished.

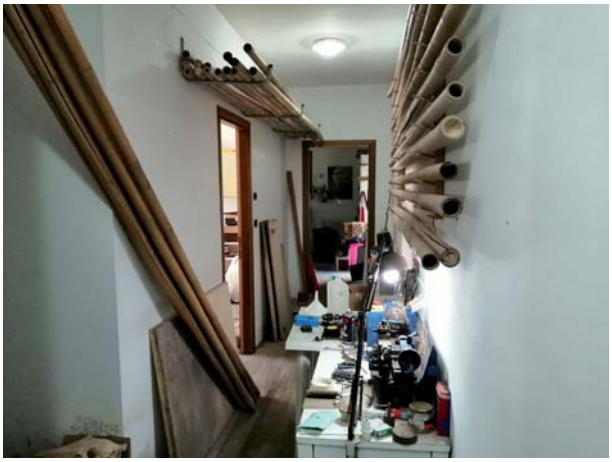
Ermanno Fiorotto

Mirco Forlani

Daniele Forner

Massimo Galvanetto

Daniele Giannoni



Giardina Marco

WHY CANE?

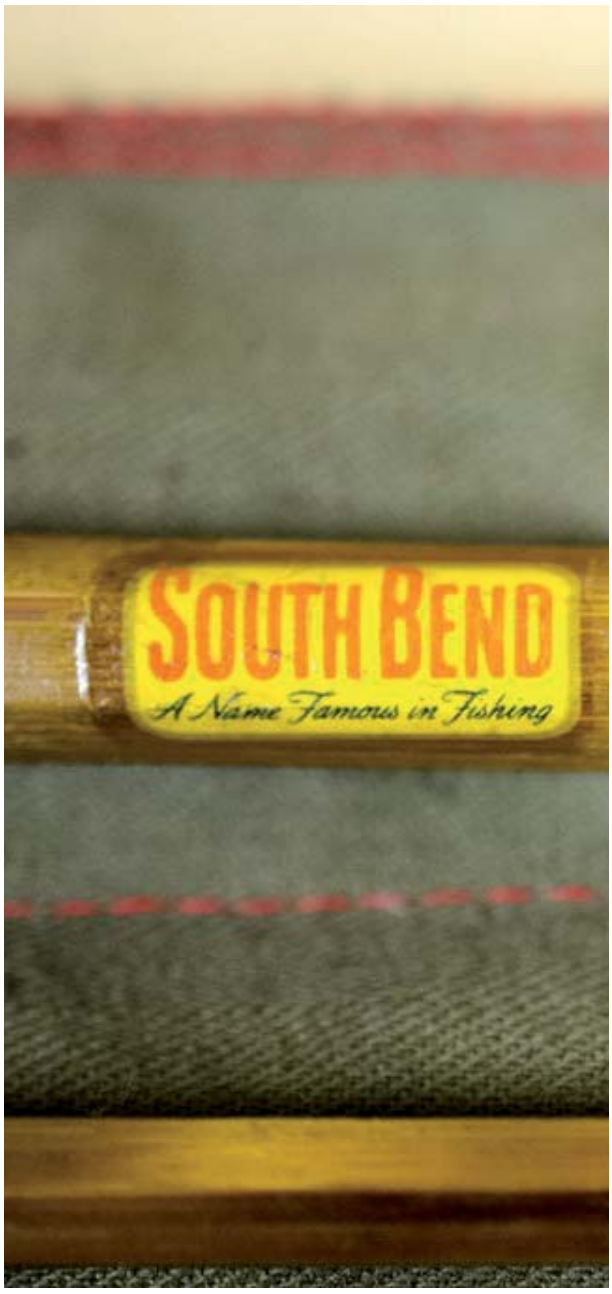
by Harrison Ross Steeves III

My first decent flyrod was a little South Bend cane rod that my Dad bought at the local hardware store. I can't tell you the length or the line weight of that rod, only that the length shortened over the years, the result of interaction with streamside vegetation and other obstacles. Along with the decrease in length off the rod the weight of the line changed accordingly. When that rod finally gave up the ghost, I went the way of most fly fishermen and began fishing with the new fiberglass rods that became popular. I then switched to the graphite models that hit the market sometime in the late sixties, but I never lost the desire to some day fish again with a fine bamboo fly rod.

I did have three cane rods that my Dad had built from blanks he bought from the Herters Company (remember them?). He did a beautiful job putting them together and rather than go into specifics suffice it to say that only one of them remains in my possession today.

Anyway, to make a long story short, my desire to own some fine bamboo fly rods has been fulfilled nicely over the past few decades. I own a number of bamboo rods that I have acquired from some very talented rod builders and I do not baby them. I have fished them all and will continue to do so in the future. I love to fish them and will do so at every opportunity. I will only name one of the rod builders from whom I have purchased bamboo rods and do so since he is an integral part of this story.

I met Rick Robbins (the rod builder in question) about twenty years ago at a fly-fishing show in Charlotte, North Carolina and we immediately hit it off. Shortly after that show I purchased my first flyrod from him and over the years I have acquired a few more of his masterpieces. Because of my friendship with Rick I have been in the enviable position of having been able to meet and become acquainted with some of the premier cane rod builders in the United States and have been privy to many of their conversations regarding the building and qualities of cane rods. Before I met this group of cane rod aficionados, I had no idea how precise and delicate the manufacture of these instruments was.



They deal in thousandths of an inch tolerance, talk in terms that you would expect to hear from professional engineers, and deal with equipment capable of manufacturing something from, essentially, a bunch of pieces of wood. It's an amazing and intricate process to say the least.

But it is not the manufacture of these jewels that I want to talk about. During the years I have been associated with Rick I have had the opportunity to participate in quite a few fly fishing shows as a professional fly designer and tier. At these shows I have had many opportunities to meet and talk with cane rod builders and listen to what they have to say. They are questioned about every aspect of cane rods, from how they are built to what they are worth.

A few examples of questions frequently asked are:

1. "I have a bamboo rod that my dad/grandfather/uncle brought back from Japan after WWII. Is it worth anything "? Most of the rod builders hate this question since they are faced with the unpleasant task of telling the owner that the rod is essentially worthless.

2. "How long does it take to build one of these rods"? That's an easy one to answer.

3. "Can you tell me who built this bamboo rod"? Sometimes yes, sometimes no.

4. "If I break a cane rod can it be fixed"? That probably depends on what sort of "break" the guy is talking about.

5. "How do I take care of a cane rod"?

6. "How big a fish can I catch on a bamboo rod"?

There are lots of other questions, but the most difficult ones to answer, to my way of thinking, are:

1. What's so special about a bamboo fly rod?

2. Why do you fish a bamboo rod instead of a fiberglass or graphite rod?

3. How is the action of a bamboo rod different from that of a graphite rod?

4. Is the action of a fiberglass rod like that of a bamboo rod?

5. Why would I pay that kind of money for a bamboo rod when I can buy a graphite rod for a lot less?

I, along with many of the rod builders I know, have attempted to answer these questions for some time. We talk about the historical aspects of cane rods, the wonderful action of a bamboo rod, the aesthetic appeal of a finely crafted instrument, and yes, the fact that a top tier bamboo rod will probably increase in value over the years. It's been a damned difficult question to answer, but I think we finally have an answer and it happened just a few days ago at the Annual Virginia Fly Fishing Show in Doswell, Virginia where Rick Robbins and I were sharing a booth. I was tying my specialty fly patterns and Rick had put up a display of his fine bamboo rods.

The crowd on Saturday had been wonderful; lots of people, lots of interest in both the Rick's rods and my flies, and lots of standing on the concrete floor talking to people. The second day of the show (Sunday) Rick and I were both tired. The crowd was noticeably smaller, but there was still a lot of interest in the booth. Rick had walked across aisle to visit with Jerry Kustich (another fine bamboo rod maker) at the Sweetgrass Rods booth and I was sitting there messing around at the vise tying up a fly. Two delightful gentlemen, Peter Douglas and Oral Lockhart, wandered by and stopped to see what I was doing. They were very interested in one of the techniques I was using and we began to discuss how this technique could be used to tie a particular shrimp pattern. It turned out that they were both at the show to represent the Bahamas Industry of Tourism and were associated with one of the lodges on Andros Island. We agreed that they would send me pictures of the shrimp and that I would try to come up with a possible pattern for it.

When we had finished our discussion of the shrimp pattern Peter began to ask me questions about Rick's bamboo rods. Rick was just across the aisle so I did my best to answer knowing that if things got too technical I could just yell at Rick to come over and take charge. I went through the usual routine about the wonderful action of cane rods, the aesthetic appeal, etc. One of his questions was simply "could you use a cane rod to catch a bone fish"? I answered as best I could, pointing out that, among other fish, cane rods were used to catch salmon and they were pretty hefty fish. I told him you would probably have to modify how the bamboo rod was handled when playing a bonefish, but that should present no real problem to an accomplished fly fisherman. At that point he indicated that he had never even picked up a bamboo rod and held it. So, I went to Rick's display, picked out a little 71/2-foot 5 weight rod and handed it to him. He held it for a few seconds and then did what most everyone does when trying out a rod, he wiggled it, flexing it across its entire length.

To this day I will swear he shut his eyes when he was doing this. He opened his eyes and turned to look at me. On his face was a look of almost disbelief.

"What do you think?", I asked.

Peter then uttered two words which perfectly described the mystique, the magic, and the unknown in the equation of the question of "why do you fish a cane rod"? A question many of us had tried to verbalize over the years and failed to do so.

He looked at me and exclaimed,

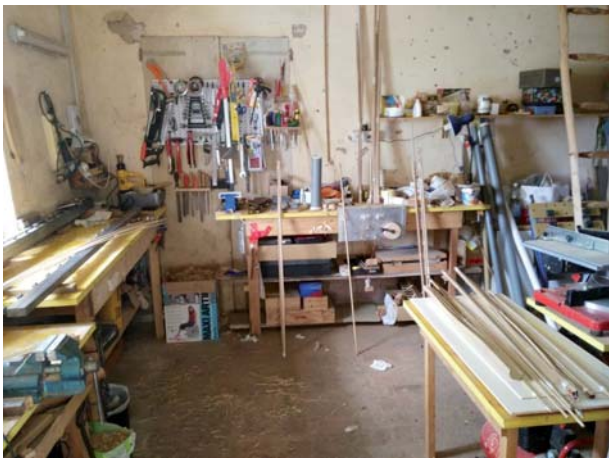
"IT'S ALIVE"

There's really nothing else to be said. Peter had just said it all.

Massimo Giuliani

Gabriele Gori

Giorgio Grondona



Pierluigi Grosoli

Luciano Manfrin

Luca Marzi

Rodmaking course and stages 2019

by Oliviero Mossier

I took my first steps along rivers and streams at a very young age, having already been introduced to fishing by my grandfather. From those unforgettable moments, when a small trout looked as big as a salmon and a fishing rod looked so high a pole I could hardly see the tip, I can assert that I have lived almost all the seasons of a fisherman.

My first experiences, marked by the spirit of youth characterised by the number of catches first and then the search for the trophy trout, I reached adulthood when the attention was drawn away from the simple number and size of the fish to concentrate on the perfection of the cast, the search for sophisticated material and finally to discover how pleasant it is to stay hours on the river watching and understanding the magical world of the life underwater. Fantastic moments that have brought me today to embrace the passion for entomology and the construction of artificial flies.

The only “arrow” missing from my “quiver” of fishing activities was bamboo rodmaking. A skill I considered too noble to pursue, considering the reverence I have always had for it. Its history, fascination and elegance, as well as the cure and artisanal dexterity it requires have always represented authentic art to me.

One day, by chance, at a gathering of the Italian School of Fly Fishing, my friend Marino Di Luca spoke about IBRA, an association I didn’t know and the bamboo rodmaking course they organised annually. So, thanks to IBRA, I had a golden opportunity to fulfil a desire I was convinced would remain but a dream: in addition to making the right fly, also the most suitable rod to fish in the rivers and streams I have been going to since the day my grandfather allowed me to accompany him fishing.

Now to the course. After 13 years from the first course, IBRA has decided to increase the training level, change the organisation and offer the participants a longer and more detailed programme. So, the course was held in two long weekends.

Although I don't know the programme of the previous courses, which according to the results were already very successful, I think the new formula of the course is excellent for two main reasons:

- Prolonging the construction time allowed the students to work with less stressful rhythms and more serenity and awareness.

- The improved theoretical part gave us the chance to grasp those fundamental notions that are part and parcel of the knowledge every rodmaker must have.

I really appreciated the theoretical aspects.

Every important phase and structure of the construction was introduced by presentations by Alberto Poratelli and Gabriele Gori, very experienced rodmakers and pulsating souls of IBRA, who in addition to inspiring great trust, also proved their competence and extreme generosity.

I think that interacting theory and practice in an active exchange supported by constructive criticism is the best teaching approach towards successful learning of any subject. Obviously this is my personal judgement as a participant who wishes to build his own rod but more importantly wants to embrace the rodmaking universe.

The first meeting was held at the end of November 2019 at Hotel Rizzi in Boario Terme which hosted us cordially and kindly.

Our instructors welcomed us and immediately we felt at ease and had a taste of the serene, though "studious" atmosphere that characterised the course.

After the delicious opening lunch, as were all the following ones, we were ready to embark on this journey in the world of rodmaking with enthusiasm; a world that until then I had only dreamed of.

The course started with an introduction of the history of Rodmaking, followed by the second part on the static and theoretical aspects linked to the design of a bamboo rod. At the end of the theoretical introduction we immediately started the practice with the choosing and splitting of the culm, the staggering of the nodes, the levelling and pressing of the nodes and lastly, but not less important, the straightening. This last phase requires a lot of precision and rigour as straight strips facilitate the next phases of planing and they are the basis of a successful rod.

After having obtained twelve strips, we were introduced to the inseparable couple of Rodmaking: the Planing Form, first the less severe and terrifying wooden one and the plane. The PF, cold rolled metal bar is uncompromising in its setting and will not tolerate any error, not even the slightest one. The plane, a tool that is just as precise, has a more harmonious shape, almost sensual and is a natural extension of the Rodmaker.

For those who have never planed in their lives, contrary to what one may imagine, "making shavings" is not so obvious. You very quickly realise that it is an art and requires above all extreme dexterity and patience. For Rodmaking, planing is the keystone and it is a skill that must be mastered and with which you must be very familiar.

The quote by A. Schopenhauer “All that is exquisite ripens slowly” is perfect for a Rodmaker, who with a lot of patience and dedication, during long hours of solitude, performs an extremely measured and repetitive movement endlessly.

It can almost be represented as a close combat with the Planing Form where the noise, the metallic sound of the plane running on the Planing Form, slowly, as the minutes go by, transforms into a crystalline eurythmic sound.

At first the blows of the plane, necessarily strong, require physical effort from the Rodmaker. Then, the last blows of the plane must be very delicate and light with the utmost attention and concentration because not even the slightest error is forgiven: the price to pay is a broken strip which, with one fell swoop, thwarts a long and hard operation.

At this point I must acknowledge the mastery and dexterity I admirably observed in Alberto Poratelli handling the plane.

Sunday morning, we proceeded to the gluing, tying and putting the strips in the oven for the polymerisation of the glue and lastly, cleaning the conference hall of the hotel which had been turned into a workshop. Time to say goodbye, but already impatient to meet again in January with the second meeting which will lead us to the end of the course.

The first meeting, undisputed kingdom of the Planing Form and the plane, was characterised by the construction of a “rod tool” which decrees par excellence the action of fishing. An action which can be achieved only if the Rodmaker strictly complies to the measurements of the Taper, the only guarantee of the fishing characteristics of the future rod.

The second meeting was characterised by the “wrapping” of the rod which defines its aesthetic aspect.

This is the step of the construction process of the rod that leaves the most creative autonomy to the Rodmaker, who may finally feel free to express their sensibility and leave their impression on the rod with various finishings.

Determined and full of enthusiasm, Friday 10 January 2020, oblivious of the “annus horribilis” ahead of us, we started the second meeting of the course with the cleaning of the blanks. In my opinion, this was the most magical moment of the construction. The time to sand a little and then as if enchanted, the two rough and inert poles, initially imprisoned in the strings and excess glue, are transformed into a foil, with a splendid blonde surface, sensual to the touch.

Finally we are holding something that is starting to look like a fly rod. This sense of fulfilment is soon quashed by the unsettling and challenging next phase: cutting the rough pieces. If it is done wrong, you will need to find a new design for a 6’6” rod instead of the Granger Aristocrat 7’ chosen for the course. Gabriele Gori’s engineering skills and the precious contribution of the instructors supported us in solving the complicated equation: length of the blanks – length of the rod design – depth of the inserts of the ferrules and all this without omitting the value of the male and female connection.

Once we have overcome the hurdle of cutting the rough pieces, lapping the ferrules, applying the handle, the reelseat and mounting the stripping guides mark the end of the rod construction.

Even all these passages, apparently simple, must be carried out with great precision as the quality of the final object depends on the details which reveal the Rodmaker's disciplined respect of the aesthetic codes and their rigour.

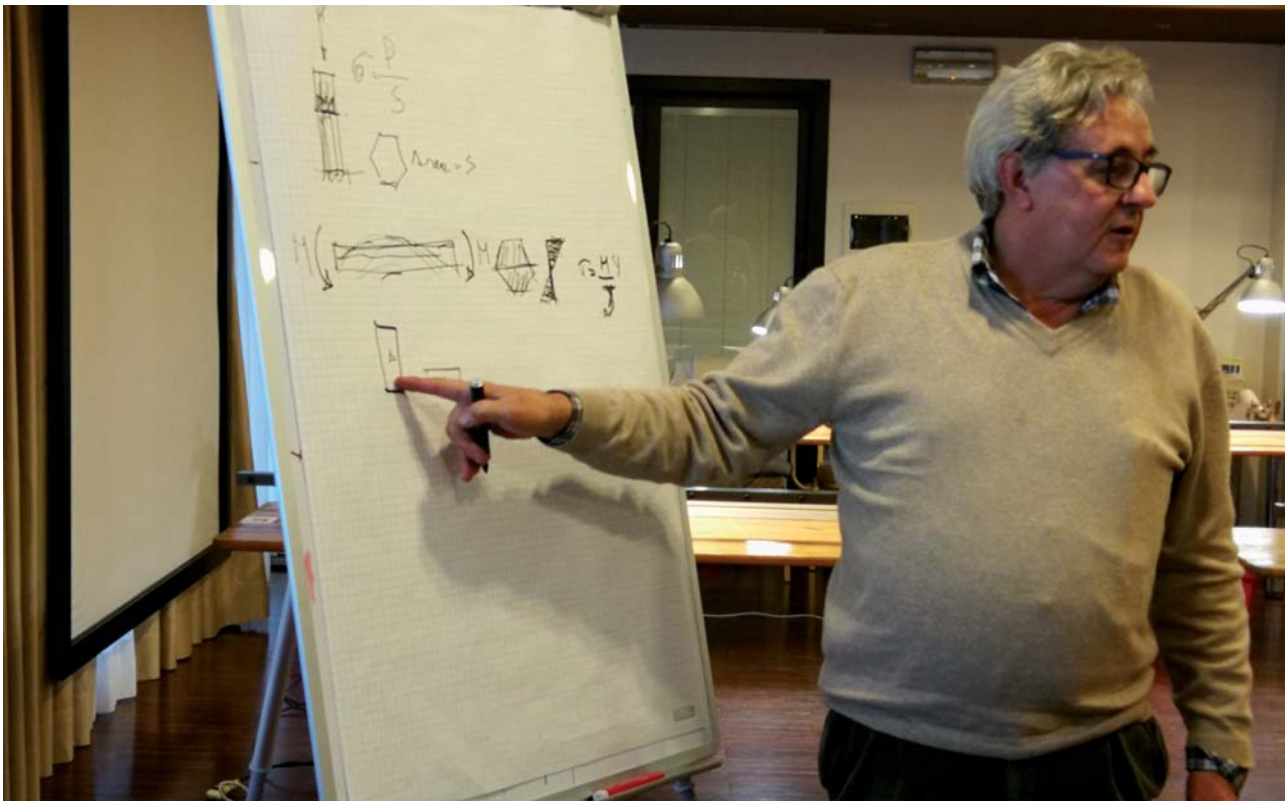
The new course allowed us to complete the final phase of the construction of a rod: the varnishing. An operation which, in the past was not possible with the assistance of the instructors due to lack of time and each participant was forced to do it alone after the course.

“There are no honours too distant to the man who prepares himself for them with patience” (Jean de La Bruyère). We have reached the end of our journey, i.e. the moment we test the rods we built “four handedly”. Because, although each of us was the creator of their own creature, the contribution of the instructors was fundamental in the success of the piece. People that have real passion, incomparable helpfulness and above all enormous generosity in transmitting and sharing skills and knowledge acquired in many years of rodmaking. They provided precious advice during all the phases and helped us in the most difficult moments. A grateful praise goes to the promoters and ambassadors of Rodmaking, the heart and soul of the 2020 course organised by IBRA: Gabriele Gori, Luca Marzi, Mauro Moretti, Moreno Borriero, Massimo Paccotti, Alberto Poratelli and a special thanks to Silvano Sanna who assisted me during the course with great competence and patience.

The destination is not the most important part of the journey, the experience and the acquaintances we make along the way are: indeed, I also took home the precious memory of my travel buddies Davide, Ermanno, Gabriele, Luciano and Mirco. Aspiring rodmakers like me who have become colleagues with whom there is healthy complicity and friendship.

I am certain I am speaking on their behalf: we all left with the awareness that we did not only acquire the construction basis of a bamboo rod but also that we met an extraordinary universe, that of Bamboo Rodmaking, where rigour meets poetry and craftsmanship sublimes to noble art.

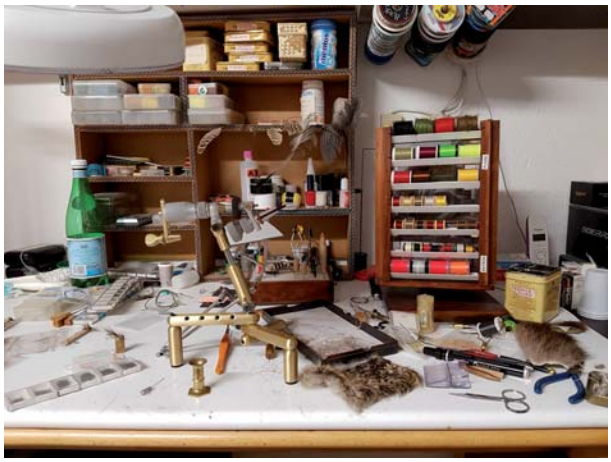
So it is with great pleasure, humility and respect that I join the magical world of Rodmaking.



Pierpaolo Miglietta

Mauro Moretti

Triboz Ortolani



Massimo Paccotti

Saverio Pandolfi

Gerolamo Pirola

Varnishing the rough piece

a varnish saving method

di Davide Fiorani

The immersion varnishing method we use to finish our bamboo rods, gives excellent results if it is carried out correctly. Those who build few rods and are equipped with a tube containing a considerable amount of diluted varnish, the concern is the conservation and aging of the product, with the risk of throwing everything out after a few months. I want to share a method of varnishing aimed at using only the amount of varnish necessary to apply to the blank and that in some ways replicates the immersion system. This method entails the subsequent tying of the guides, ferrules, etc and their varnishing with a brush. Note: before varnishing remember the writing on the rod.

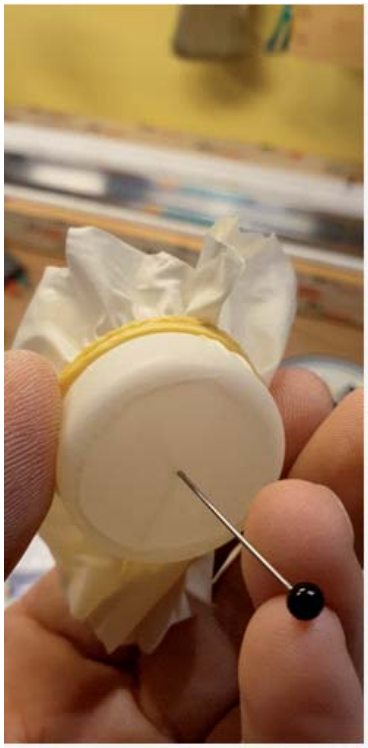
For the conservation of the varnish, I refer you to Alberto Poratelli's article "Let's save the varnish" in the BJ16 at this link

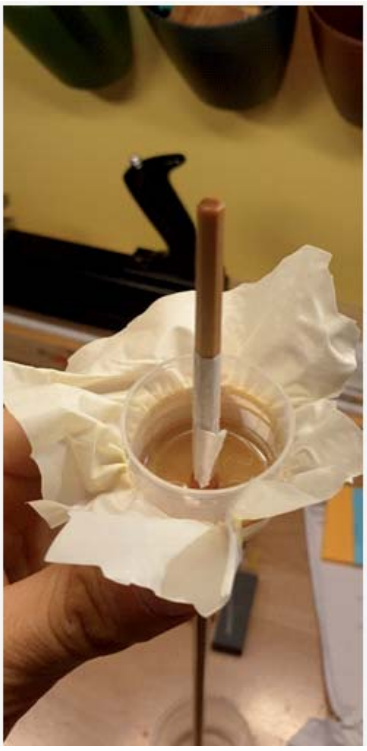
https://www.rodmakers.it/wp-content/uploads/Bamboo_Journal/EN/BJ16ITA.pdf#page=18

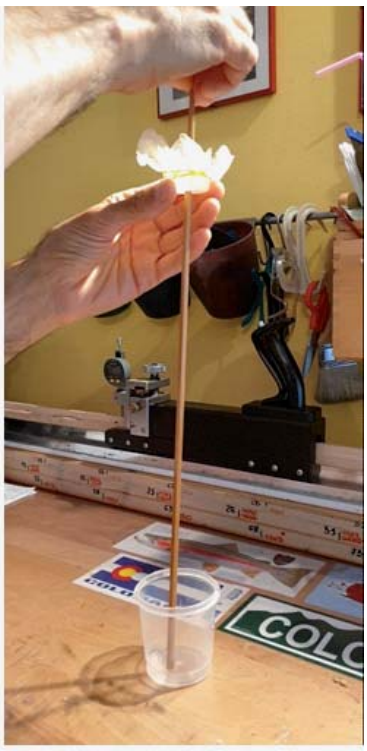
which will be our starting point. In addition to the varnish and white spirit as thinner, you need a couple of small rigid disposable plastic cups, a vinyl glove, an elastic, a cutter, a pin and an accurate scale with 0.1g resolution. The varnish I use is the Cecchi Spinnaker and it is prepared by diluting it with white spirit in the weight proportions, Spinnaker 1g : white spirit 0.7g. The dilution is fundamental to achieve the right flow of the mixture on the surface of the bamboo. If you want to use another varnish, you will need to do some tests to find the right dilution according to its viscosity. For a 2-piece rod up to a length of 8'0'' usually 2g of varnish suffice for each section. Remove the varnish from the container with a syringe, put it in the cup and weigh it on the scale. Add the right proportion of white spirit and mix. It is a good idea to then filter the mixture with a piece of nylon stocking; ensure there are no micro bubbles in the diluted varnish and let it rest for a few minutes.

In the meantime, cut the bottom of the second cup with the cutter and substitute it with a piece of vinyl from the glove, which will be kept taut and in place with an elastic, as in the diagram below. Ensure the vinyl is clean and free from talc: do not use nitrile or latex gloves. You can also use the plastic top of a deodorant spray that is rigid and resists deformation caused by the compression of the elastic.

Protect the nickel silver ferrule, if it is already fitted, with a little masking tape. Prick the centre of the vinyl membrane with the pin and pass the top of the section of the rod you need to varnish through it (the smaller part). Put a small container on the table where you will put the bottom of the blank so as not to mess.





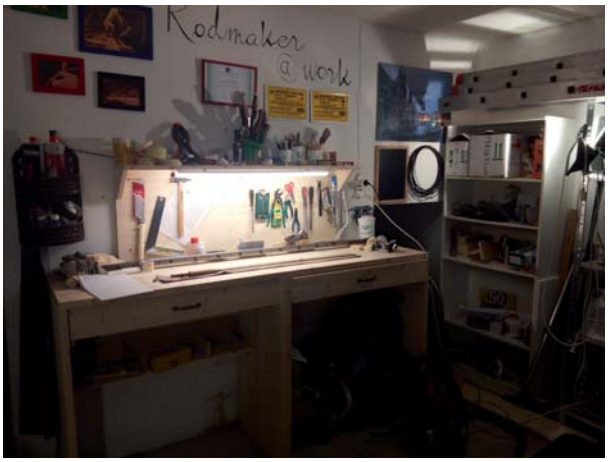


After having poured the diluted varnish in the cup, make it drip very slowly on the blank with your left hand. At the same time the right hand will rotate the blank holding it from the top, creating a downward screw effect of the cup. The vinyl adheres to the surface of the bamboo and keeps the varnish in the cup, creating a mini immersion effect on a height of 2-3 millimetres of the blank.

If something happens to cause imperfections in the varnishing, raise the cup to the top of the blank and repeat the operation. Do this until you reach the bottom of the rod section and lift it to remove the cup with the varnish. Check that there are no smudges of varnish and hang the varnished blank to dry. Like the immersion system, after the varnish has dried, you can apply more layers by repeating the procedure.

Alberto Poratelli

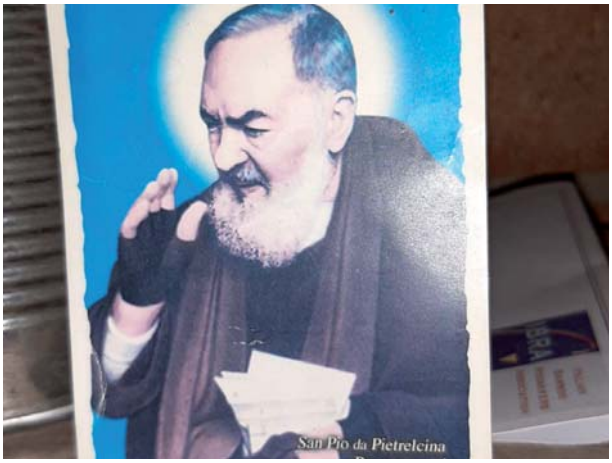
Ermanno Riccardi



Marco Salvini

Silvano Sanna

Giancarlo Tronconi



Sergio Dal Lago

IBRA at the Fola bridge on the Scoltenna stream

IBRA
TRIBUTE TO ROBERTO PRAGLIOLA
ON THE OCCASION OF THE BAMBOO DAY IN FIUMALBO

Newsletter e Bollettino
dell' Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association

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