



Durban cane rod builders guild

OUT WITH THE NEW

By Dr Andrew A Mather

BAMBOO rods are so old fashioned ... or so I thought. After a break of many years I decided to get back into the game. We'd had a few decades of fibre-glass, then graphite, and I couldn't believe that people were talking about bamboo rods. In fact, they were talking about them in hushed tones!

A chance encounter with two bamboo rods belonging to Peter Brigg and Ian Cox, both made by Stephen Boshoff, proved to be a revelation. Like a small kid in playschool I knew that I had to have one too.

After asking around Durban I was directed to Gordon Gove who had previously made bamboo rods, but due to work pressure and insufficient interest had confined his rod building to those requested for family and friends.

I mooted the idea of making a rod and he commented that he'd always wanted to form a guild of like-minded individuals. Gordon had spent over two years building up all the equipment needed and had eventually mothballed the project.

An enquiry was duly posted on Trout Talk, and I got 14 positive responses; we started our training under Gordon's oversight in January

2016. Gordon has been exceedingly generous, not only with his workshop facilities and time, but also with the supply of Tonkin cane to get us started on our first rods.

The group decided to make either a Payne 100 4-wt or a Young Midge 4-wt. The first task was to file down the nodes and split a culm of bamboo. As it was the first task the group was very cautious and apprehensive.

Filing the nodes was straightforward, but getting the split to run so that we ended up with reasonably uniform strips we could use was stressful for a few of us. Gordon's experience kicked in, and by the end of the afternoon





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everybody had a clutch of bamboo sticks. Next we had to straighten the cane at the nodes; a heat gun and a vice soon sort these out.

The next stage is to square off the cane strips and, joy of joys, Gordon had a machine to do that. Once the cane was squared it was ready to be planed into 60 degree parallel strips. Again the use of a purpose-built machine made this a simple task.

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Groups of six strips were then tied together with a custom-made wrapping machine. This was the first chance we had of seeing what the rod could


potentially look like. The wrapped cane strips were heat treated and then it was the start of what, for many of us, was the operation we were most apprehensive about — planing. The planing form consists of a pair of steel strips with the central joint line filed to a 60 degree taper, increasing in depth at 1 thousand of an inch per linear inch.

After adjusting the planing form at the “stations” (adjustment positions located every five inches) to the required rod taper, the first strips were placed in and planed.

The thicker butt sections were the first we started on, mainly so we could get the hang of it on thicker strips

before we started the thin tip sections. At the time of writing most of the group had planed the tip section and glued these up.

We still have to make reel seats and build cork handles, fit the ferrules and eyes, varnish the rod and take it fishing — I might even put on my tweed jacket and dig out my wicker creel!

Catch us at the SA Flyfishing and Fly-tying Expo at Lourensford on 30th July 2016 where we hope to have a few rods on display. 

• For further information on the guild contact Andrew Mather on <andrew.mather@telkomsa.net>.

