

HORNSBY DISTRICT WOODTURNERS INC

NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2009

(Greg Croker)

By 11 am on Saturday 14th Carolyn McCully was all set-up and ready to demonstrate and tutor our 27 members present (great to see Johnno Johnson at this meeting) in the fine art of pyrography.

After a short welcome from Lindsay and some gossip regarding the Guild's recent questionnaire we got straight into the principles of pyrography.

Carolyn discussed the equipment used starting with the original wire or nails heated on flame, the ether burners, and the current system of a variable low voltage power to heat a nichrome wire to almost red heat so as to achieve the desired 'burning effect.'

Making the burn is not however straight forward, the gauge of the wire, and its shape, the weight of the stylus pen and the speed of operation are all used to produce the outline in the varying degrees necessary to get the 'picture' required. Some pyrography pens hold a spoon shaped burning 'nib' and are used to achieve a textured darkening rather than a dark line. The voltage is adjusted to give the optimum results for the type of wood (or leather and similar materials). For example, tracing a design from photocopies or from tracing paper requires different set-ups which initially is optimised by trial and error.

Carolyn demonstrated the use of many techniques for the production of a pattern or picture freehand on various wooden blocks and plywood. Time, temperature, multiple application and wood type (sanded surfaced wood is best) are the basis with the use of the 'spoon' stylus to achieve a more subtle shading (brown or grey as opposed to black) finish. The thickness of the line is inversely proportional to the speed of movement over the wood, and the pen should be rotated around curves to move more evenly across the wood grain. Use light pressure working towards your body with a cushion if necessary to steady the turning.

For non-artistic members, the use of design tracing from P/C's and commercial tracing designs is available. Don't use carbon paper as this will cause problems later, presumably with smudging. Care needs to be taken when tracing onto bowls and paper stretching to conform to the bowl shape. The previously described technique of transferring the 'ink' from a photocopy with turps can also be used.

Once the outline is complete the design can be coloured. Care needs to be taken to ensure the paint does not wash-over (run) past the desired line. Water colour pencils or paints can be used, ink stains- layered to increase complexity, and acrylic paints drying time.

As both burns and colours can fade in sunlight all finishes are recommended to be coated with UV protection clear varnish.

After the demo, we had some lunch, and resumed with the tutorial, with 5 units available for practice of the above. Most members tried their hand & eye on these machines under Carolyn's and Lindsay's guidance.

The day finished with a shortened Show & Tell.

Martin's three smaller bowls were first up. Two were made from cyprus with wavy edges any one from jacaranda; all well finished.

Tom also showed a good bowl from 'purple' cyprus pine harvested locally and still shedding its resin.

Elwyn showed a largish camphor laurel oval bowl. The piece was exceptional as the wood was spalted!

John Knight presented a set of matching salt and pepper grinders. Made from a combination of merbeau and ash and with tulip shaped design the units were very interesting.

John Edwards turned a small candle stick, one of a pair, made from finely worked and well coloured mallee wood.

Lloyd showed a pleasing camphor laurel open platter about 10" in diameter and showing good figuring colour.

Greg brought three small, too small, paperweights made from scraps of gum burl. Two items were stained to improve their looks, but are still 'lightweights.' He also showed a small vase made from laminated layers of Kauri boards each rotated through 90 degrees and separated by a darker veneer.

John's large silky oak straight sided bowl was a good example of the wood and was finished well using wax.

Arron was the final in the S&T. He showed two amazing items. Firstly a crystal set, with a 24" turned aerial coil attached. Quite an exceptional item, which we are assured works once an earth wire is attached.

The second item was also a radio, but somewhat newer technology, a rebuilt AWA type 1950's valve radio. Arron rebuilt the bakelite cabinet using all types of turned woods and other embellishments to match the style of the era. This unit also is in working order.

To finish Harry showed some tools that he uses to centre his large turnings using the hot melt method to reverse mount on the face plate. These will no doubt be copied by many members.

For next meeting, bring a piece hopefully with some pyrography included for Show & Tell. Next meeting 11 am Saturday 14 March 2009

Till then.....keep turning.