



# BAMBOO JOURNAL

IBRA ONLINE NEWSLETTER



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ITALIAN BAMBOO RODMAKERS ASSOCIATION

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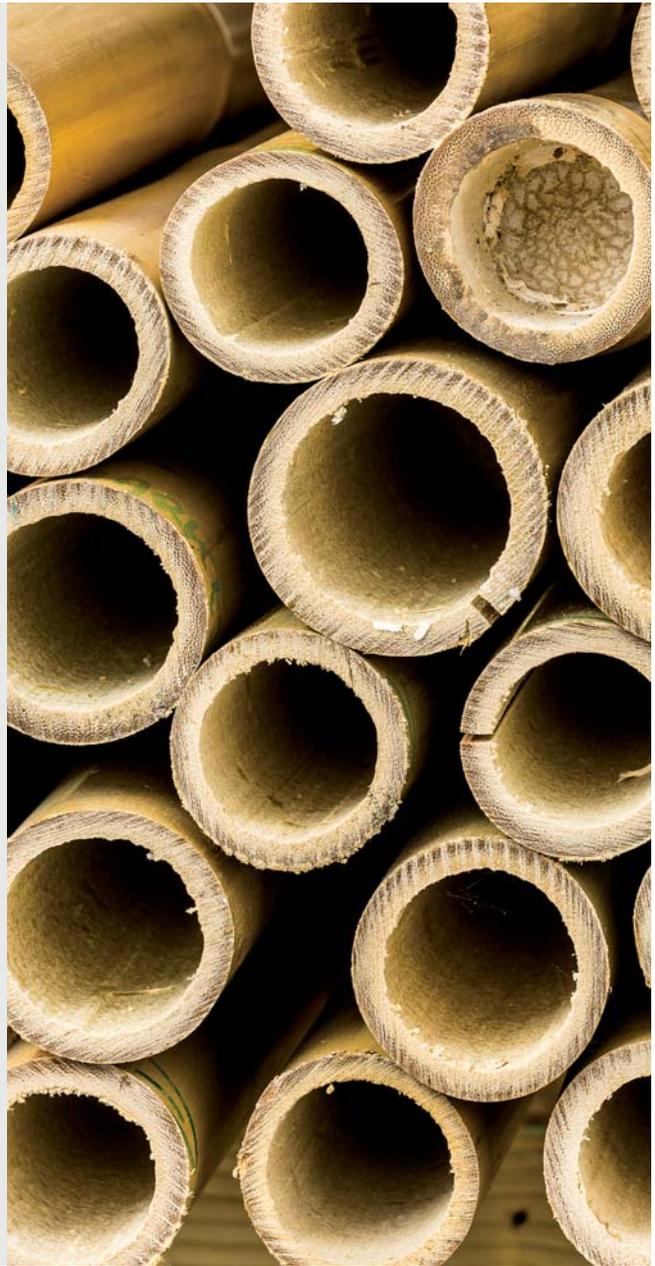
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### Bamboo Journal issue 24 - october 2022

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Photo on page 2: Culms of bamboo *Pseudosasa amabilis*  
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# EDITORIAL

2022: it is the year that we will certainly remember for a long time!



It is above all the year in which IBRA prematurely lost its President and founding member, Gabriele Gori, but IBRA has also returned to have its great annual gathering. It is the year of the great and never-ending summer heat and the great drought that hit the whole country. It is the year in which the controversies resulting from the so-called Allochtonia Decree (Translators note: Decree against non-native breeds) continued everywhere (perhaps in more subdued tones than last year).

Of course our poor fish, already put under stress by the very high fishing pressure, by the inadequacy of local and not always enlightened river management, stressed by many unresolved pollution issues, didn't really deserve on one hand a drought that completely dried up many streams and rivers in the Apennines, and also many canals in the plains which are normally full of life and on the other hand an absolutely anomalous heat that produced an equally anomalous melting of the glaciers that finally produced a quite compromised summer fishing season in various districts in the Alps.

The concerns for the health of our planet, woods and forests, glaciers, seas, living beings, fish, are quickly growing. We talk a lot and everywhere about them, not always appropriately, but the impression is that we are still far from a global solution. But it is good that we are starting to worry about them seriously even if, sometimes, a little naively.

It is the year that has seen a more than exponential growth in the cost of energy in Italy and in Europe, whether it is due to the war in Ukraine or to speculative manoeuvres both in Italy and Amsterdam, or perhaps due to a perverse combination of both things. After having learned to talk daily about the "spread" a couple of years ago, today we have to familiarize ourselves with the "price cap" of gas! Will it also have an impact on rodmaking?

Let's now briefly introduce this issue of the BJ: you will find the beautiful story of Gabriele Gori and of a friendship that is intertwined with the history of IBRA, signed by Marco Orlando Giardina. He offers us later a real compendium on woods for rodmaking. I believe that this work will remain a point of reference for many for a long time.

Oscar Ferri shares (very good!) with all readers two of his ideas: the first concerns a useful device for milling wooden inserts, the second concerns the way he uses to "mix" and somehow homogenize the uneven mechanical characteristics of the bamboo strips when making hexagonal blanks.

I think this idea may spark some healthy discussion. If someone wants to comment, about this or any other article of the BJ, please do so by writing to: editor@rodmakers. It would be nice to start from the next issue a permanent column of discussions and letters from readers, which would also help fill the time between one gathering and the next one!

Adding to the "technical" section of the BJ, Peer Doring-Arjes shows us how he created a nice (and useful) bamboo rod holder, even portable, in fact he showed it off at the meeting.

Edward Barder, the famous English rodmaker, was a guest of IBRA and one of the speakers at the meeting. He allowed us to publish in full the presentation he made on that occasion. Since I find him a really helpful person, I urged him to write for the BJ his impressions of having eventually met IBRA in person and also to tell us about his (first ?!) fishing experience in Italy (on how he makes his perfect rods there is already a lot of material in his article). Above all you will find many surprises!

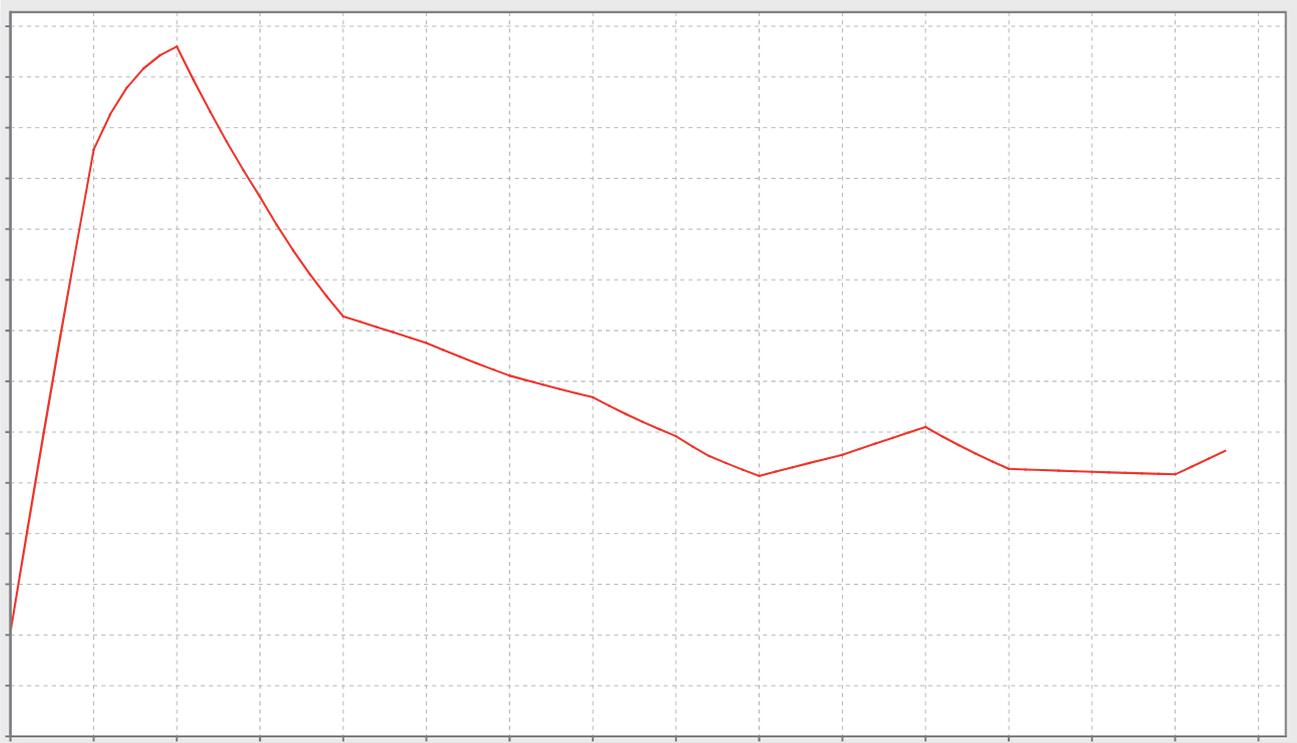
How can we not talk about this year's gathering? In fact, you will find a few words but many images in my report (especially dedicated to those who couldn't be there).

For the series of "reflections" there is the usual contribution "from the donkey's bench" by Giorgio Grondona, which deals in this issue with a quite delicate and potentially controversial theme, and a brief but intense essential reflection by Stephen Boshoff, Moreno Borriero and Alberto Poratelli.

You may have noticed that I have not talked much about Gabriele Gori here: someone who knew him much better and for a longer time than I did so in this issue of the BJ, but I just want to say that I already miss his human qualities, competence and availability.

That's all folks! Sorry if it's brief!





what rod is it? \_\_\_\_\_

# A FRIEND

by Marco Orlando Giardina



Neither of us could have expected it - as often happens in life - but that we should meet, was inevitable. In 1990 I had been to London for the Crufts Dog Show. The largest exhibition of purebred dogs in the world. Back then my partner and I were very busy with the dog world and we started breeding Rhodesian Ridgebacks.

But I also went to London with another purpose, I wanted to buy myself a fishing rod. I thought it was no longer the time for winter climbing, nor for adventurous travel, but I didn't want to be reduced to walks in the parks either. Fishing seemed like a good compromise to me. But fishing that was also movement. I had bought Bruni's book - still beautiful today in my opinion, those by Cotta Ramusino and the texts by Jean-Paul Pequegnot. Perhaps everything was a bit dated, but as I completely lacked a culture and a family fishing tradition, I didn't realize it.

On the last day in London, I walked into a beautiful shop, near Fulham Road, and there an experienced and kind salesman guided me to the right choice. My father once, I was still a kid, said to me "Marco, fly fishing is the fishing of gentlemen". Maybe I wasn't exactly a "gentleman", but I liked the idea. I opted for a rod, a reel and two lines. The rod was, of course, made of bamboo, a Sharp 8' 3".

I started fishing, Volturno, Tanagro, Sele, Cavaliere, the two Calore, it was really fun. And then I expanded my stock of rods: my pusher was Jamie Maxton Graham, Scottish and deaf as a bell. I was looking forward to his catalogues of wonderful "Fishing Tackle of Yesterday". I spent a fortune, but that wasn't enough, I wanted to build my rods. It was not my idea, but it was instilled in me by reading Pequegnot's book. The book hinted at this possibility and gave some general information. I began to inquire. I browsed everything on the Internet, very little, bought Cattanaich's book and met Cosimo Raia in Castel di Sangro just the day before the fly fishing world championships in 1992. I had read his articles on rodmaking on Fly and Spinning and Roberto Pragliola also introduced me. We talked for a while and when Roberto heard about my idea of building bamboo rods, he gave me a look of human pity. But he didn't manage to discourage me.

Two things were missing to go on - actually there were three things that were missing, but I would have noticed later - the Planing Form and the Bamboo. A little thing!



And here is fate, often cynical and cheating, but in this case a generous friend.

Who, fly fisherman, did not read the PIPAM Forum at the time? I certainly did. In the forum bamboo rodmaking was mainly animated by Jo, Giovanni Nese and followed by a small group of enthusiasts. Few, but fervent. A little fundamentalist, but not dangerous!

An unexpected announcement came out on the PIPAM Market. Someone wanted to sell *Arundinaria Amabilis* culms. I got on the phone and in one shot found five culms and above all I had found a friend.

Yes, that's right, I had found a friend.

I could write about him for hours, but I would risk boring you with a thousand anecdotes and a thousand episodes. In short, I had met a "respectable person", in the sense that this expression was once given. A person ready for dialogue, attentive to the thoughts of the other and respectful of the opinions of others. All accompanied by a deep technical preparation, as a structural engineer, perfect for studying the technical aspects of rodmaking. But always without making the knowledge of him weigh, indeed trying to share it with others.

We spent hours on the phone. Sometimes Carla, his wife, answered, who, despite the brief conversations, seemed really very nice to me. Later I met her in person. I went to their house several times. Carla is an excellent cook; I was able to appreciate the real Florentine cuisine. Especially the *ribollita*. She was as I had heard her on the phone: nice, extremely welcoming and with a biting Florentine humour. A very close couple. They had two children, Ilaria and Gian Paolo. A beautiful family, crowned by the presence of two dogs, a Newfoundland, a true English gentleman and Poldo, a foundling with the appearance of Pointer who, once I stayed with them, thought it best to sleep all night on my bed.

He was way ahead of me. He had already built a rod and above all he had built a planing form for himself, following Thomas Penrose's instructions on the internet. A titanic job. In his footsteps I tried the same path: after a nightmare summer I gave up. I was not up to par. I didn't have the determination of him.

I had it made by a precision workshop based on his design. They were happy to be able to work on a precise and complete project. So, my PF also had his touch.



In January 2005, he took part in the Salsomaggiore fly fishing exhibition organized by UNPEM. He met other rodmakers, a few, but good ones. Marco Boretti and Alberto Poratelli. Boretti's rods impressed him a lot for their quality and beauty. With Alberto it was the beginning of a long and solid friendship over time.

On that occasion the idea was born, on what was happening in the USA, to organize a meeting, a "gathering" of Italian rodmakers.

In the meantime, we organized a blog with the collaboration of PIPAM. On my web page I published photos and instructions on the construction of a bamboo rod, he organized and moderated the interventions on the Forum thread. It was a great success and above all it attracted many people to take an interest in bamboo rods. It was under the banner of "... it can be done!".

The idea of the Italian gathering took shape and took off. The enthusiasm of many coalesced around this idea and he managed to direct this enthusiasm towards a concrete goal.



On 14 May 2005 he inaugurated the first Italian gathering. It took place in Sansepolcro on the banks of the Tiber tail water at Podere Violino, which at the time was a very popular fishing lodge and which gathered fishermen from all over Italy.

It was the beginning. A good number of people attended - more than we had imagined - and this spurred everyone on. We had to create an association, IBRA. The Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association was formally founded on July 19, 2005 by the Founding Members Albano Barbiani, known as Ghost, Marco Boretti, Marco Giardina, known as MOG, Alberto Poratelli and my friend.

Obviously, he was elected without discussion to the office of President until the first AGM which was to be held after a year. And of course, he got re-elected, and again, and again. It was the soul and the engine of the IBRA. He could not but be the President. In 2014 he decided to take a break, but in 2018 he was re-elected again with an absolute majority.

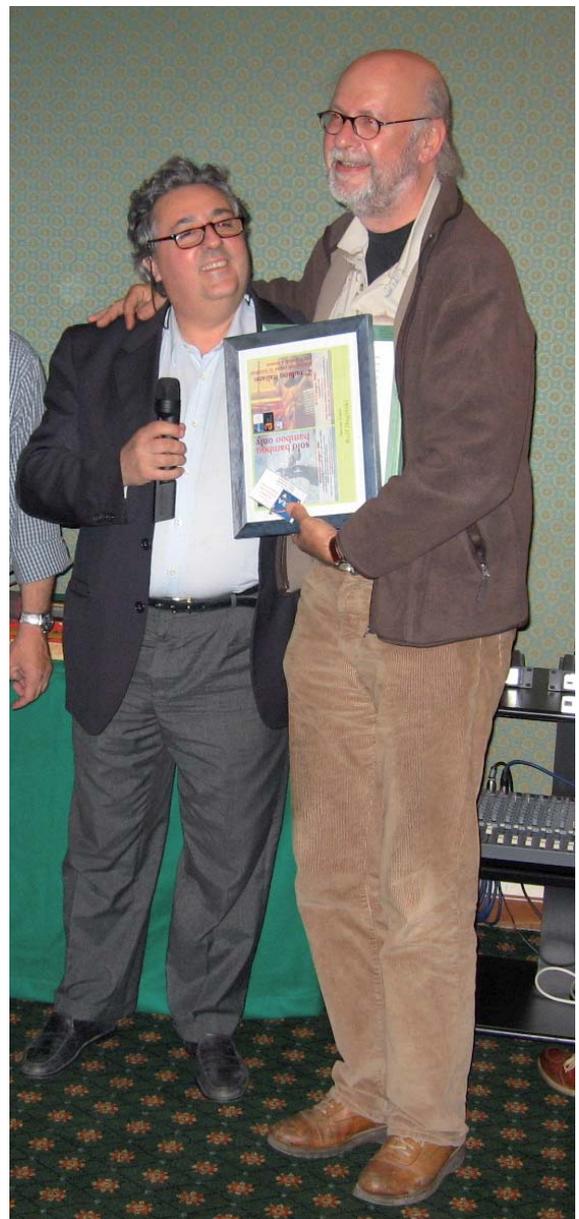
Podere Violino became the headquarters of IBRA until 2018 and the rodmaking gatherings and classes were held there. The two key moments of associative life: high-level international rodmaking personalities were invited to the rallies. For Brandin, Jeff Wagner, Tom Moran to name just a few, but I have to say that the guest that impressed me most was Hoagy B. Carmichael, the author of the rodmaking "bible": "A Master's Guide to Building a Bamboo Fly Rod: The Essential and Classic Principles and Methods". In addition to being a great rodmaker, he had been a witness and actor of the Bamboo Rodmaker Renaissance, which led from the 1970s to the present day to a rebirth and worldwide expansion of rodmaking.



He too was an actor of this change. A leading actor. He was rightly convinced that IBRA's main mission was to spread rodmaking and that the main tool was the creation of training courses. It seemed a difficult goal and instead he managed, with tenacity and faith, to achieve it.

The first course was held in the autumn of 2006. The first six rodmaker apprentices!

It was a success. Since then, a course has been organized every year in which over seventy student-rodmakers have participated over the years.



But no less with rodmakers “on the other side of the pond”!

Specialized fairs and events of other national fishing associations saw the constant presence of IBRA. All this under his guidance and inspiration.

Only one piece of the complete mosaic was missing: an informative body that would allow us to project ourselves towards the outside, towards a wider national and international audience. This gap was also filled. In May 2008, issue 0 of the Bamboo Journal, IBRA's online magazine and newsletter, was published.

The first editor / director was Alberto Azzoni, who was able to give the publication a serious editorial line without seriousness, which until now has tried to be the style of BJ.

From September 2009 it was my turn to take over the fate of the "magazine" until July 2014, when I passed my hand to an editorial committee composed of him and Alberto Poratelli and then from February 2015 it passed into the capable and intelligent hands of Maurizio Cardamone who today as editor takes care of the BJ.

All this under his guidance and inspiration.

the first economic crisis and the terrible years of Covid19 marked this last period, tiring people, leading them to moments of closure and invisibility towards others. The tools of computer communication managed in part to bridge the distances and to maintain the lines of comparison between the partners, and he was the sure reference on which to lean on.

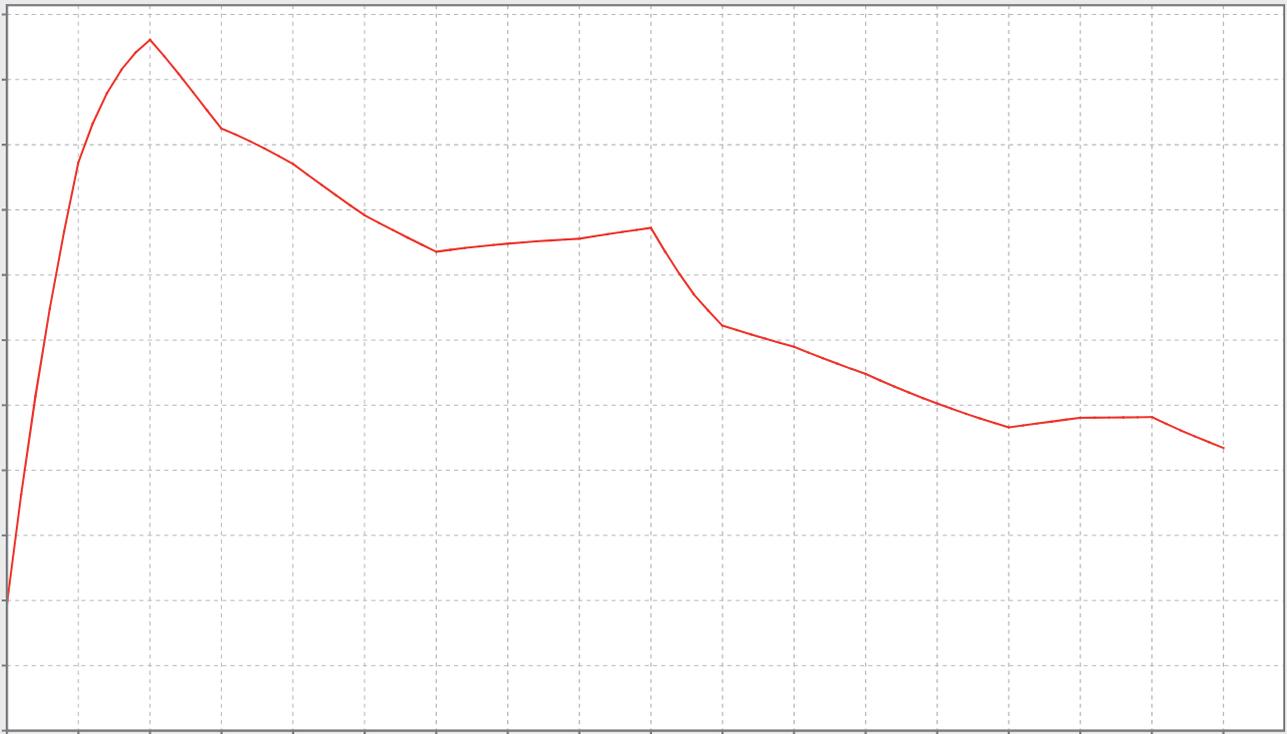
We hadn't heard from each other for some time. My inevitable laziness. I decided I wanted to have a good chat with him and called him. It was February 17th. He answered me from the Careggi hospital, the university polyclinic in Florence. He told me why he was there. I was frozen. I couldn't speak coherently and felt a feeling of emptiness inside. On the contrary, he was lucid, serene, courageous.

On 23 March Alberto Poratelli communicated his death to the world of rodmaking with a WhatsApp message ...

I am sure that those who have had the good fortune to know him will never forget him and I hope they will be able to pass on his example, his rigor and his humanity to the new rodmakers to come.

I have lost a friend. Gabriele Gori.





what rod is it? \_\_\_\_\_

# A jig for milling inserts

by Oscar Ferri

In the world of reel seats, essentially two types of hardware dominate the scene: one requires a regular cylindrical support (the handle) as the hardware itself is shaped to receive the foot of the reel.



The second type also requires that the support has a groove deep enough to become the seat of the foot of the reel, as the hardware is cylindrical without any modelling ...



Everything therefore stems from the stubborn idea of using the lathe to mill the reel seat. By now I was moving towards the idea of not digging a spider out of the hole, then like when you realize you see something that has always been under your eyes: the amazement of simplicity.

Unfortunately, I have neither the culture nor the equipment to develop the idea in a single piece so I started rummaging through the scraps and I pulled out what I needed: in this case a piece of 35x100x5 mm strip two pieces of the same strip of 35x25x5 millimetres and finally a corner piece of 35x35x100x5 millimetres.

Once the lathe turret was removed, I measured the front excursion of the slide which on my lathe corresponds to 75 millimetres then the worm screw loses its grip. I also needed the position of the bolt that is used to secure the tool turret to the slide.



The next step was to make a through hole of the diameter of the turret stop bolt and to make two holes of a suitable diameter to then be threaded for a bolt of 5 mm.

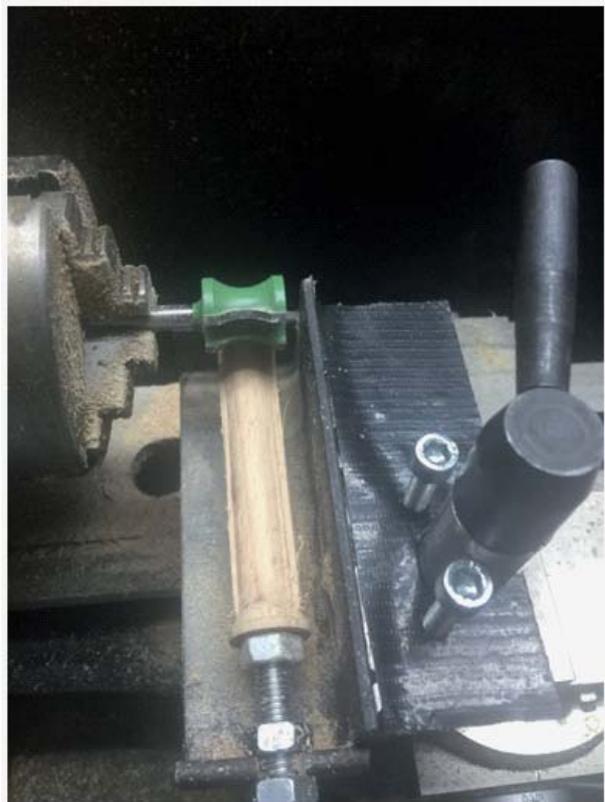
At this point I made a hole in the small plates with a diameter of 8 mm towards the edge and with the help of the hose and the file I opened it creating a "U" and put my hand to the welder I assembled everything with this result.



Once the insert has been turned to size, it is mounted in the slide, in this way.



The cutter is mounted and the slide is locked with the turret stop bolt using an adequate thickness to ensure that everything is firmly fixed.



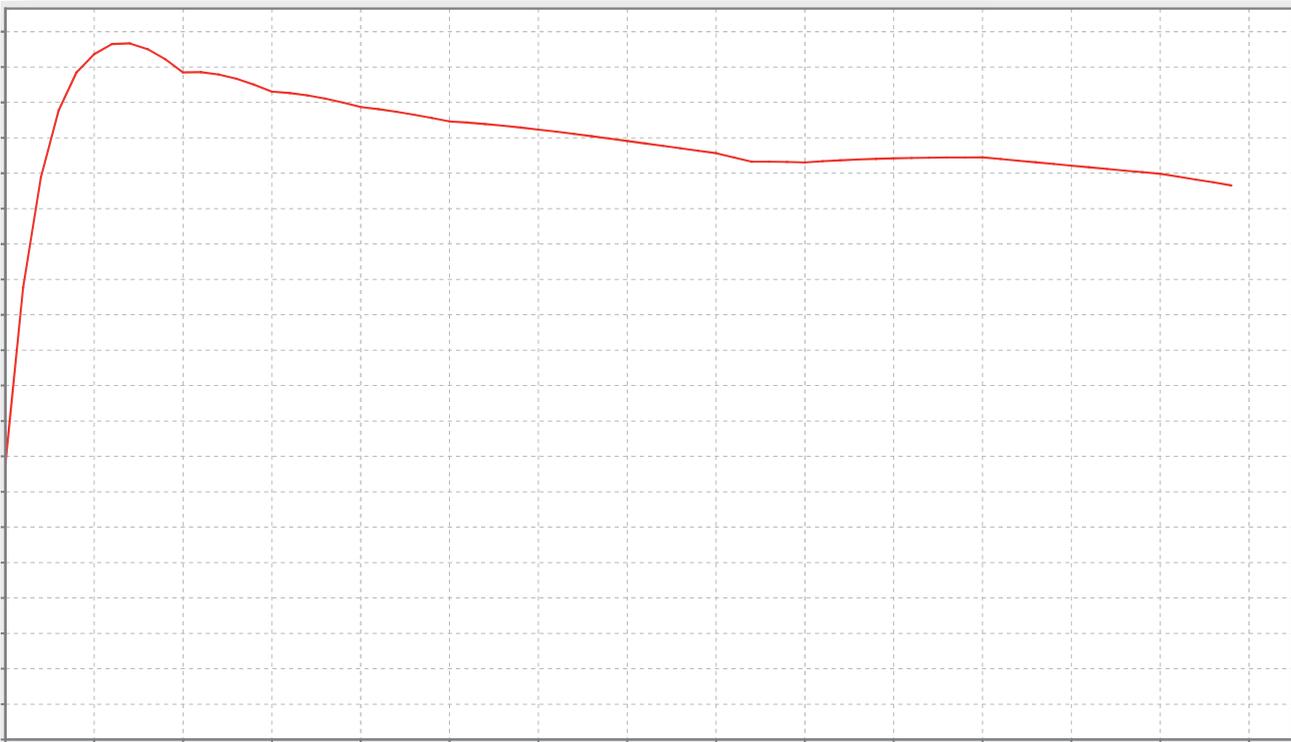
Now by loosening the turret stop and screwing the two screws on the side, the slide acquires the vertical movement and allows us to raise the handle towards the cutter and to adjust the depth of the passes we will make by bringing the slide back and forth as we like until it reaches the desired depth.



Obviously, this is the basis of the principle with enormous room for improvement.

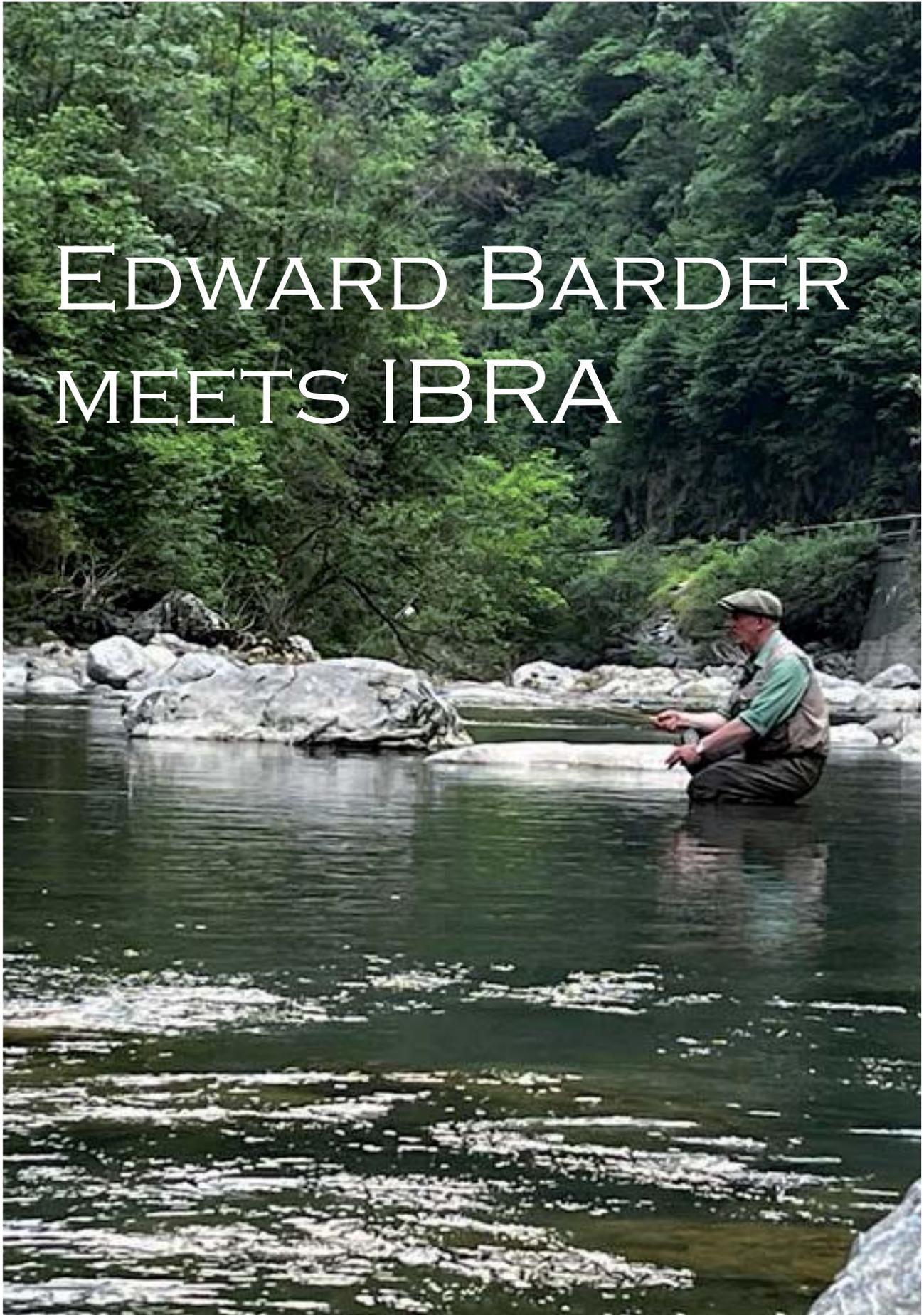


Two test inserts, of different diameters, just milled



what rod is it? \_\_\_\_\_

# EDWARD BARDER MEETS IBRA



*Q: Edward, you know that the 2022 gathering took eventually place after two years missed due to the well-known pandemic events. For all IBRA members and bamboo enthusiasts this was a great opportunity to see friends again and to touch and talk of our beloved bamboo rods in presence. Having a renowned rodmaker like you here in Boario was a wonderful opportunity and the speech you gave at the assembly was really full of ideas and certainly much appreciated by everyone. Would you like to tell me how this happened?*

A: In 2019, Moreno Borriero asked me if I would like to attend a gathering in 2020 as IBRA's guest. I was honoured to have been invited and had booked my flight from England. Then Covid spoiled our plans.

I've enjoyed a long term correspondence with Moreno and we'd had a family gathering in Lucca in 2018. I was looking forward to seeing him again. Since 2014, Marzio Giglio and I had been in regular contact and in 2019 I spent a wonderful weekend in Berlin with Peer Doering-Arjes, trying to persuade him to sell me one hundred of his best Tonkin culms. In the end, I got ninety out of him. It was like a friendly wrestling match! Quite rightly, Peer continues to questions my antiquated attitudes to rod making and I make a feeble defence of them.

It was very good news, therefore, to hear from Moreno that IBRA would be having its gathering at Boario Terme in 2022, and I would be welcome to come along. I offered to bring a rod to show people what I do and to give a brief talk. Moreno said he'd take care of the rest of the arrangements and of course, he would translate my talk as I am, shamefully, a monoglot.



*Q: I am sure that you had known IBRA for some time and that you matured some ideas about this organization, but now I want to ask you: what is your perception now, after having actively participated in the gathering and having met a large part of the members in person?*

A: Of course, I have been reading the Bamboo Journal for many years. Great minds are at work within IBRA. As a full time rod maker of thirty two years standing, I was wondering if I would be revealed as a rustic artisan in the company of so many sophisticated craftsmen. The research and development that IBRA members have applied to bamboo rod making is clearly impressive. Just as the automotive industry needs Formula 1 to advance, bamboo rod making needs IBRA to thrive and develop.

Never before has there been such a pooling of ideas and resources devoted to bamboo rod making. In the past, most rod making was done by professionals who tended to be very secretive in order to protect their commercial advantage.

As I discovered on the second day of the gathering this year, IBRA is not inhibited by secrecy and there is almost no need for the protection of trade secrets because most of the members are building rods purely for pleasure. This came as a pleasant surprise to me as I walked around the exhibition hall. I admired many very beautiful and finely made rods. Sometimes I asked their makers where they sold their rods. Almost without exception, they looked rather surprised, telling me that they didn't sell rods, they made them to fish with and for the enjoyment of the craft.

I saw fascinating and useful methods of rod construction on display: Moreno was making hexagonal winding checks, someone else was slitting ferrules with a very neat method that anyone could use, Philipp Sicher proved to me that it is possible to stabilise Olive wood for reel seat spacers (I'll be doing this in future!) and I got to see Marzio Giglio demonstrating the latest phase in the development of his former beam method of planing bamboo strips. There was much more to see in a very relaxed, convivial atmosphere. Moreno patiently translated my little talk and I was pleased to see that some of those kind enough to attend remained awake to the end.

In my long career I have known other professional rod makers and a few amateurs. We have been cautious in our discussions and have only shared information guardedly and with some reluctance. The ethos of IBRA could not be more different.

In my opinion, the circumspect attitude of the remnant professional rod making trade would lead to its extinction. The existence of IBRA, on the other hand, will ensure that the craft of bamboo rod making will enjoy a long and healthy future. It is about progress, a community of people with a shared passion and while it takes the technical aspects of the craft seriously, its members certainly have fun while they are at it.

Although I understand French quite well, my lack of practice rendered my attempts to speak the language hopeless, as Frédéric Leroy discovered when we were discussing his fascinating bamboo compressing method over dinner. He rescued me by speaking to me in English. The members from Germany, Switzerland, France, Hungary and of course Italy all took pity on me and spoke in English too. They may have been dismayed by my lack of a second language but they were endlessly patient, for which I shall always be grateful.



*Q: It was to me quite unexpected to discover (and why then?) that you actually already know quite a lot of Italian places. However, I believe that Val Camonica, the beautiful Oglio and the Dezzo rivers, where we fished a little during the gathering, have been a new experience for you, especially compared to the chalkstreams you are certainly more used to. How do you rate your fishing experience in Italy?*

A: To be in a country that I love to discuss rod making was bound to be a pleasure, but what of the fishing? On Friday the 27th of May, I would cast a fly for the first time onto the waters of an Italian river. A local member, Mauro Bortolotti, was at my side to guide me. We communicated cheerfully by a combination of scattered Italian, English and the universal sign language of the fly fisher.

It was a beautiful sunny day, the bright light reflecting dazzlingly from the swift waters of the Oglio as it descended from the Dolomites. What a contrast to the gentle chalk streams of my native southern England. The conditions for fishing weren't ideal but who cared? We were all happy to be casting our flies and enjoying the feeling of bamboo flexing in our hands.

This water was not entirely strange to me. In 2018, my family and I had had a holiday beside Lago d'Iseo, which is fed by the Oglio. One day while swimming in the lake, a brown trout of 3 kgs leaped out of the water right in front of me. I had wondered where it came from. Now, standing in the Oglio with Mauro, I knew. He had a picture on his phone of a fish nearly as big that he'd caught not long ago from this river.

Mauro showed me the abundant insect life in the river and gave me some very interesting wet flies. It was not a day for trout to be taking their meals from the surface so I happily accepted Mauro's gift. We made our way downstream to some faster water shaded by trees. Mauro knew the place where a fish would take. I suspect he knows every trout in the river. I was, for once, wise enough to take his advice and on the third or fourth cast I had a good strong take from a trout. I missed it.

It was Mauro's turn for a cast and he put his long rod to good use, swinging his wet fly on an intermediate line into the trout's lie. He didn't miss the take when it came and quickly landed a fine wild brown trout. We admired it, the first Italian trout I'd seen on the end of a line, before releasing it.

This was a very pleasant start to the day. A fish landed, rods tried out and admired, the company of happy anglers.

With the sun high, we went to Mauro's place for lunch. Sensible anglers in the UK take a break in the middle of the day too and we can manage a good picnic. The al fresco feast that Mauro's family gave us was altogether different and I shall never forget it. It was with some reluctance that we left the comfort of the table for our fishing rods and chest waders.



*Q: I am not 100% sure, but I guess that Mauro's trout was the only one caught by all the IBRA members in the morning. In fact, due to the rains of the previous days, the river level had risen and the water had become somewhat dirty and it was only recovering from the morning. Furthermore, the sun was blazing and it was very hot. Local members strongly suggested to try something different...*



A: Driven with considerable panache by Maurizio, we then headed out of the Oglio valley and up into the mountains. As the road climbed and narrowed, I could see the river beneath us, its perfectly clear waters dashing between huge boulders and into calm, deep pools. Even as we drove along, I could see trout in those pools. This was a new experience for me.

I've seen many clear, cool streams in the mountains of Italy, but until today, chub were the ubiquitous fish. I love chub, but where were the trout, I always wondered.

Mauro and I scrambled down the bank from the road and into the stream. The water was refreshingly cool and the stones and boulders were covered with caddis cases. Trout food! Fish were rising too. With Mauro's guidance and boundless enthusiasm, we made our way upstream from pool to rapid to pool. Using Mauro's flies again and doing as he suggested, I caught my first Italian trout, and a second, a third and so on. We tried each other's rods (Mauro's was one he'd made himself, of course, and very nice it was too) and had a great deal of fun. The trout we landed were small but perfect and there were bigger ones that got away.

I'd like to return to the Val Camonica to fish. Another holiday by Lago d'Iseo is likely and when we're there, I'll contact Mauro to see if he's free for a couple of evenings. During the IBRA weekend, we left the water to make it back to town in time for dinner. I strongly suspect that both the Oglio and the Dezzo came alive at 10 pm when we were having our coffee.

I've been very fortunate to fish many rivers and lakes in England, Scotland, Wales and the US. Some have been rain-fed, the water in others seeped from springs or percolated from chalk aquifers. I've loved them all, but the trout of Europe had eluded me. Finally, thanks to IBRA and Mauro Bortolotti, I can say that I have fished for and caught wild trout in Italy.



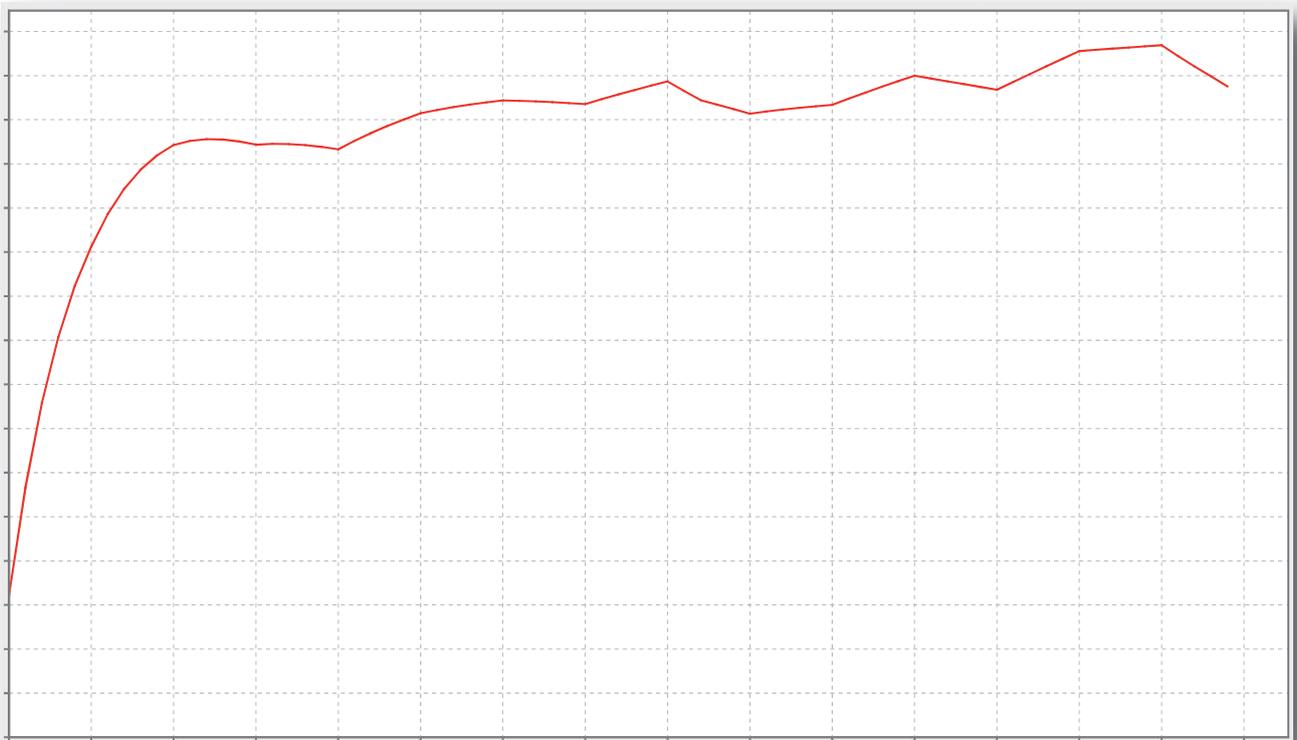
*Q: I am very happy to know that your Italian fishing experience was so enjoyable. On the part of IBRA it is right to acknowledge your great willingness to share part of your rodmaker experience with us. I'd like also to personally thank you for the very pleasant time spent together.*

If you'll allow me, I'd like to spend time with IBRA again. I could deliver another one of my riveting talks, perhaps about straightening rods sections, or the correct angles for milling cutters. These are important subjects and a guaranteed cure for insomnia. It would be fun to fish for trout in Italy again, and most of all, I'd be happy in the company of so many like-minded people. We bamboo fanatics must stick together.

I'm very grateful to IBRA for inviting me to join them this year. The Association and the many members I met were extremely gracious, kind and hospitable.

With sincere thanks and best wishes,  
Edward Barder





what rod is it?

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# A bamboo rack for bamboo rods

*by Peer Doering-Arjes*

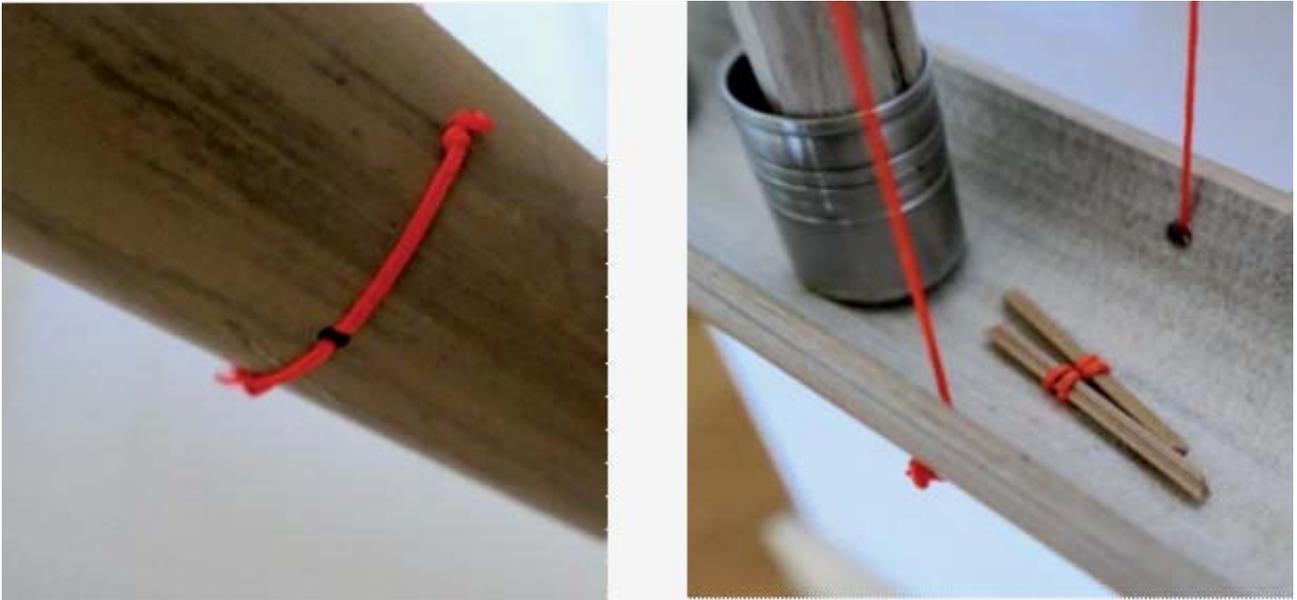
For those who want to build something other than a rod from a bamboo culm for a change and for those who have too many rods and want to hang them decoratively. It was not only a pity that my rods stored so far invisible in the drawer, the drawer was also slowly full.

It took a long time, but suddenly the idea was there, how I can build a simple and practical rod rack from bamboo, which is even beautiful.

The culm is split in the middle. Holes are drilled in one half, large enough for the top of the rod with the rings to fit through nicely. Although I first removed the hard enamel layer completely with a scraper, after 25 holes the drill was so dull that the holes could no longer be drilled accurately. That's how hard bamboo is.

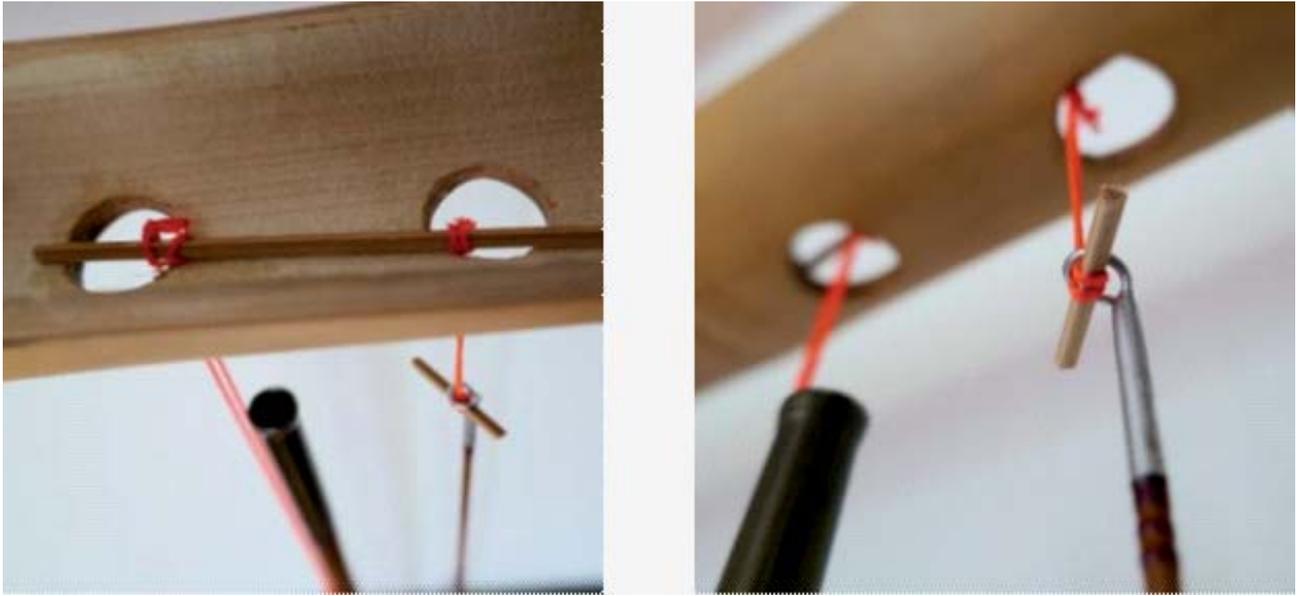


For hanging with threads, two small holes are drilled in the top half of the culm at each end, and three small holes in the bottom half. Then two hooks are drilled into the ceiling and threads are used to position the halves of the culm at the desired height. In the lower half, the thread is fixed with a bamboo stick.



Rods that are too long for the room height are hung in pieces with a small addition in the holes of the upper half.

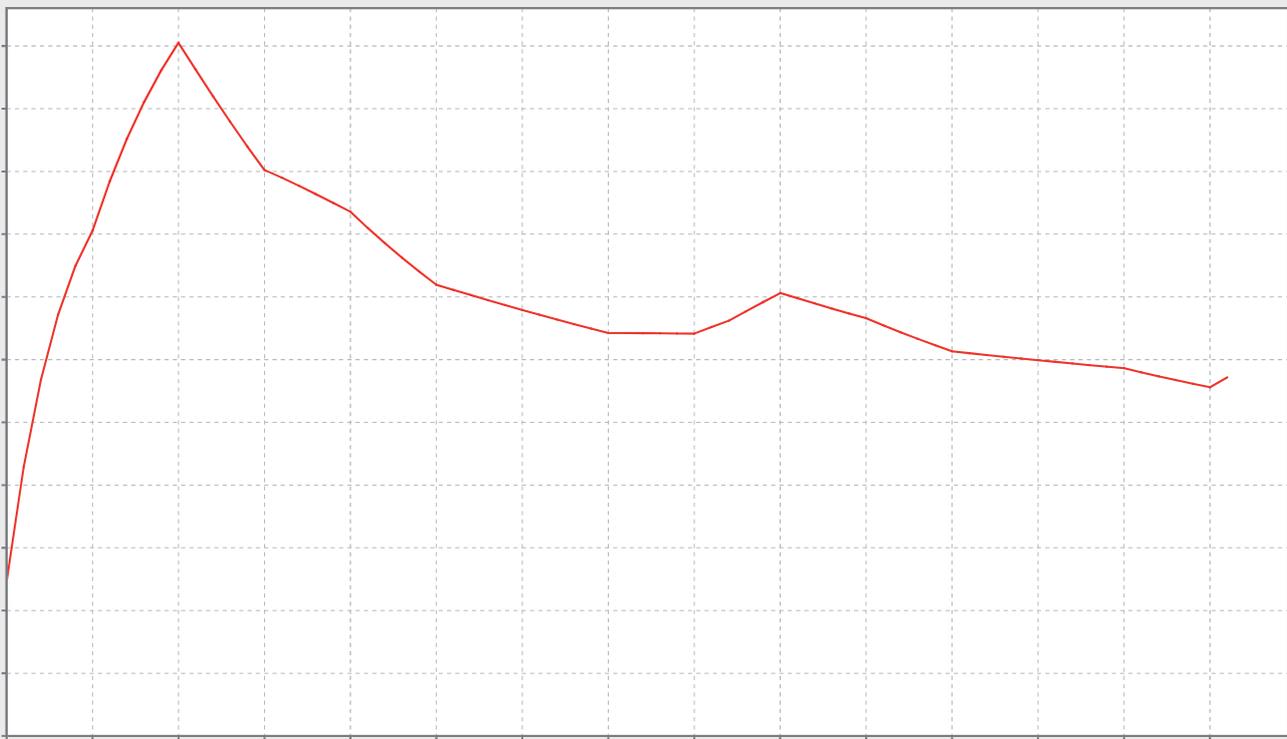




The rod rack can be built with great satisfaction in a fraction of the time it takes to build a rod. It is easily transported to rod makers gatherings.



*All photos by the author,  
except the last one:  
© Ottavio Bisaz*



what rod is it? \_\_\_\_\_



*(editor's note: this is an unabridged adaptation of Edward's invited speech at the 16th IBRA gathering, 28th of May, 2022)*

I've been making my living from rod making for thirtytwo years. It's been my sole occupation during this time and I therefore know all about over-work and self-imposed poverty.

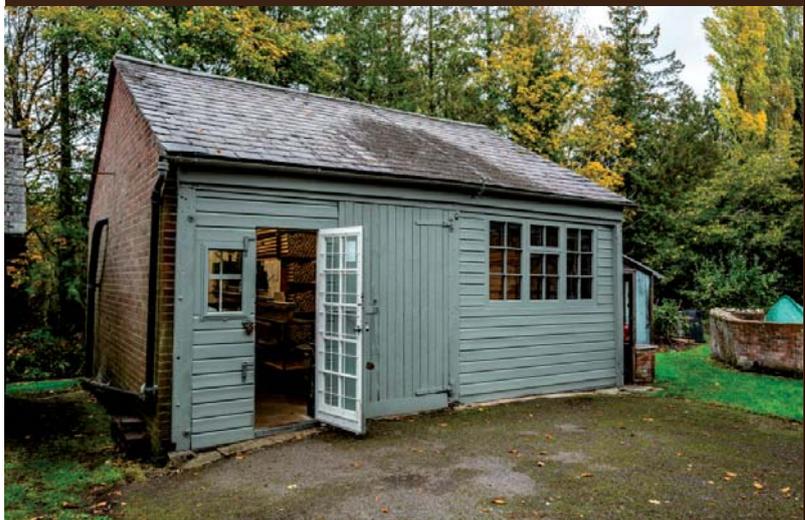
was drawn to bamboo rods at an early age.

I grew up at a time when they were common place. Fibreglass and carbon fibre are fabulous materials from which to make fishing rods, but I never loved them as I do bamboo.

As a boy, I developed quite good hand skills and inevitably this led to making and repairing fishing tackle. The first bamboo rod I sold was commissioned in 1987. I looked at that rod last Friday and it's still in good condition.

# I'M EDWARD BARDER, AND THIS IS HOW I BUILD MY RODS ...

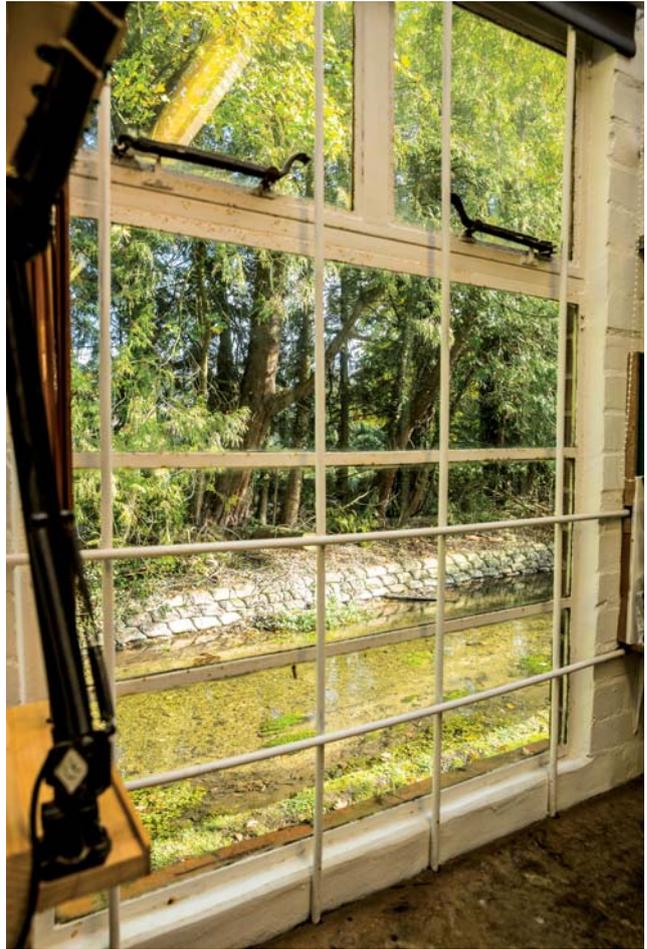
*by Edward Barder*



I am not a scientist, my mathematics is almost non-existent and I have had no formal training in anything that would help a rod maker. However, with a lot of determination and some luck, I have, with my colleague of twenty nine years, Colin Whitehouse, been able to build well over fifteen hundred split bamboo fishing rods. We have a two to three year waiting list and have made rods for anglers in most countries where fly fishing is practiced.

I'm emphatically not a Radical Bamboo Rod Builder. I am, if anything, an ultra-conservative. My rods are made on traditional lines.

Influences have been Garrison, Leonard and the work of the makers he trained. I have of course learned a great deal from fishing with rods I've made, from the responses of customers and from making rods every day. I have to confess that the aesthetic style of the rods I saw in a 1982 Thomas & Thomas catalogue was something I wanted to emulate. Before I started making rods full time, I managed a fishing tackle shop in my native Kennet valley for two years, and then spent two years working in the Hardy shop in London, where I was lucky enough to inspect rods made by Garrison, Gillum, Payne, Leonard, FE Thomas and others. Rods made by Hiram Hawes, EW Edwards, Hardy, Ogden Smith and Pezon et Michel have all passed through my hands, as well as some nice Grangers, Heddons and on one memorable occasion, a pair of Kosmic rods. Having the opportunity to handle and inspect many of the very best rods showed me the standard of workmanship that I should aspire to.



At my workshop we are driven by a determination to perform every process to the very best of our abilities and to use the best raw materials we can get. Our rods are expensive and we are able to justify the purchase of these materials in significant quantities.



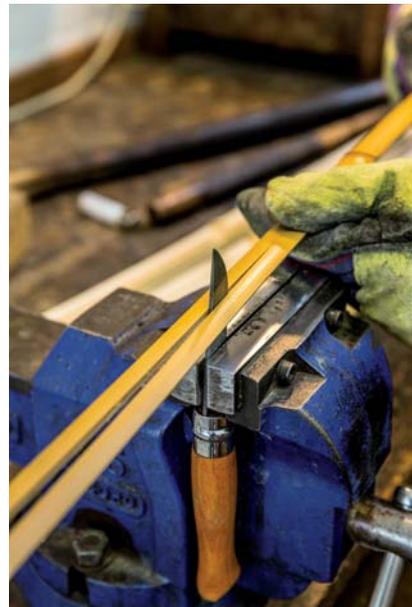
### **The split bamboo blanks.**

I select bamboo culms for their appropriateness for the rods I am going to build and cut them to length so that their node positions are not too close to tip rings, ferrules and swelled butts. I try to select bamboo that is clean and free from cosmetic blemishes or marks that indicate potential weakness, such as worm holes, cuts and cracks. The rod I brought at the IBRA meeting has some water marks and a grey node or two that I would not permit in a finished rod today. It was made in 2004 and I had less clean bamboo then.

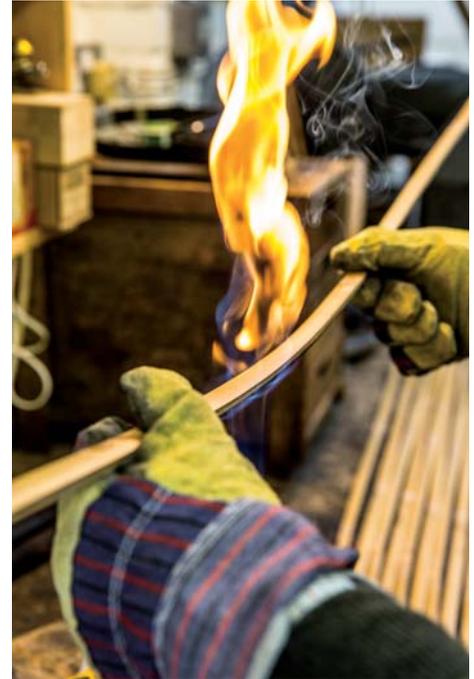
I like to drive out sap and toughen bamboo culms by exposing them to a low pressure gas flame. I can treat each pole individually in this way. The low pressure flame is far less aggressive than a high pressure blow torch and I stop this process when the culm is no longer emitting steam or sap. I do not use this method to colour the bamboo. The resulting colour is an incidental by-product of the process. Bamboo treated this way splits very cleanly- far more so than untreated bamboo. I also have an oven for baking bamboo, but I prefer the result I get with my gas jet.



The bamboo is then split with a multi-bladed wedge and further split with a knife. I then remove the inner part of the nodal diaphragms, leaving a slight concave surface. The lip of the node is also carefully filed off. I then straighten the node, using the heat of the gas jet, and while still very hot, the straightened node is flattened in the jaws of a vice and allowed to cool briefly while I start to straighten the next node. This is quite tricky and extremely tedious work. I've straightened and flattened so many thousands of nodes that I have become quite proficient at it, but I can hardly wait for my friend Peer (n.d.e.: Doering-Arjes) to supply some of the mythical straw-coloured Vietnamese bamboo that has one meter between nodes.



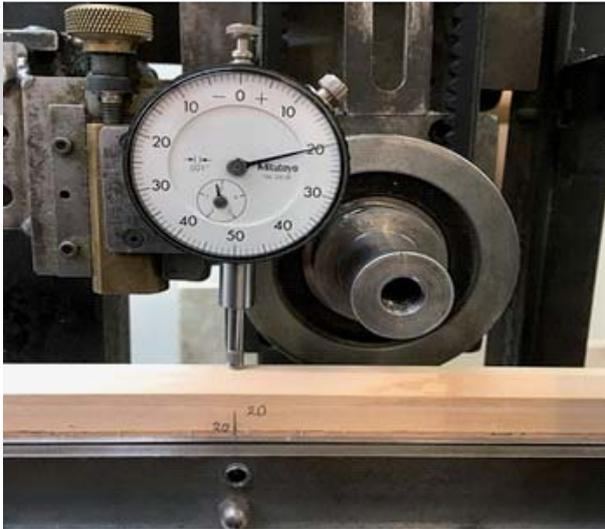
*A splitting tool being driven along the length of a pole by tapping it with a hammer. The blades separate the fibres ahead of them so that the fibres are always followed exactly and never cut across. Further splitting of the bamboo into narrower strips. It is possible to drive a splitting tool with as many as ten blades down a pole. The force required to do this with a tool with more than ten blades would require a hydraulic ram.*



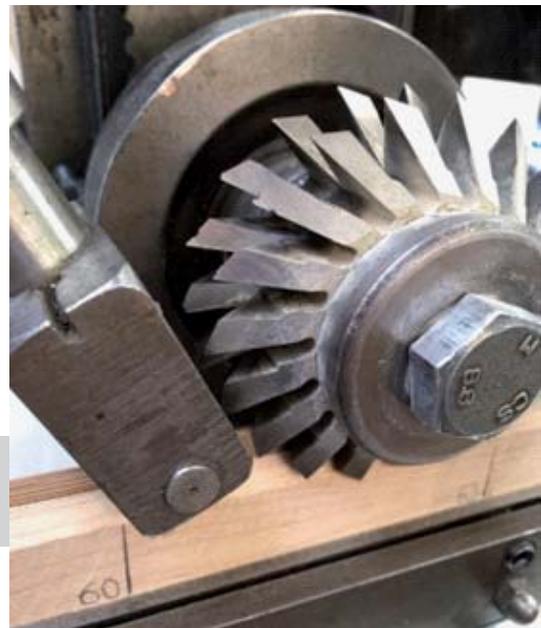
I also straighten the inter-nodal parts of every strip so that each one is flat and straight from end to end. Until the early two thousands, I had bamboo that required very little if any inter-nodal straightening. Since 2005, when I imported 1,000 culms, I have noticed that most Tonkin bamboo I've seen has been quite crooked. A pity!

Bamboo has a long memory and I believe that a rod will have the best chance of remaining straight if it is made from straight material. This is important because a crooked rod not only looks sad, but it probably won't cast well.

For reasons of consistency and commercial necessity, I use a purpose made mill to machine the prepared strips. My machine uses hardwood patterns which are set up on an adjustable bed that works on the same principal as a steel hand planing form. My process gives me extremely consistent and accurate strips. Our blanks, when glued up, retain a tolerance of +/- one thousandth of an inch. I keep a record of my machining operations, and I can tell you that the sections for some 8' #4-weight rods I made last year were virtually identical to the rod you are seeing today, which was made eighteen years ago. I believe that repeatable consistency is vitally important in a professional operation.



*Setting up the taper on the milling machine that will shape & taper the bamboo strips*



*60° high speed steel milling cutters*



*Clamping a bamboo strip to the carriage of the milling machine*

*A bamboo strip, face down, held in position by a spring loaded roller, being fed through the 60° milling cutters. The bamboo emerges from the milling cutters, face down. Now it is a tapered triangular strip, with its outer power fibres intact and the charred pith that was visible (a harmless consequence of heat straightening) in the previous slide milled away*



Our blanks are glued up using a urea-melamine adhesive. We use a Garrison-style binder of our own make. Glued sections are cured for two weeks while hanging in a heated tube. They are then straightened over heat and cleaned only when properly straight. The accompanying pictures will show you that we don't do anything unusual, but we do work very carefully and we've had a great deal of practice.

*The six glued strips are gathered together, power fibres on the outside, ready for binding.*





*The rod section is driven along by a tensioned drive belt wrapped twice around it, as a similarly tensioned binding cord is applied. The surplus glue is forced out by this process, and seamless permanent joints are formed, creating a solid hexagonal rod section*



*6 butts, 6 middles & 12 tips, glued up and in the string. Note the hanging loops attached, from which the sections hang during the glue curing and seasoning process. This takes several weeks in a warm drying chamber.*

*Carefully removing the binding cord from a seasoned rod section.*



*The blanks, as seasoned sections are now called, for a 6, 3-piece, 2-top fly rods.*



*The perfectly straight rod section is carefully cleaned of glue residue and the outer bark of the bamboo (the outer power fibres are never removed) using a cork sanding block and fine abrasives.*



*Glued up & seasoned rod sections are a long way from their origins as whole culms of bamboo. Despite all of the earlier straightening work, a new section will not be dead straight, so it must be straightened again over a suitable heat source.*



*The Smart & Brown model 'M' tool room lathe that we use to make ferrules, reel seat & handle metalwork, among other things. Made pre-1939, they really don't make them like this any more.*

### Ferrules.

The ferrules we make ourselves, from nickel silver tube. Joints are always a subject for much debate among contemporary rod makers. We know how to make really good ferrules, fitted so that they don't weaken the sections. They are not especially light, but neither are they disastrously heavy. They can be replaced in part or entirely when they become worn, and they work well. Bamboo ferrules, carbon fibre ferrules, spliced joints and the rest I leave up to you. The ferrules on the rod I've brought with me are becoming a little easy and I may have to replace them quite soon. Remember, this rod is eighteen years old and it's been used a lot!



*Nickel silver ferrules with splint ends and waterproof caps, made by Colin to H L Leonard's design of 1878*



*The ferrules fitted to the blanks we saw earlier.*

*Specially selected Portuguese cork rings of the very best quality, known as Flor grade, are glued on one at a time to form the rod handle.*

### Handles.

Our fly rod handles are, 99% of the time, quite a plain classic cigar shape. I believe that as we all have different hands, contoured handles such as the full and half Wells are very hard to shape to fit a user's hand properly. Look at the handles of tennis rackets. They are very plain. Our handles have evolved to grasp quite plain shapes. We now take half inch thick corks, cut them in half and then use only the best half.



## Reel seats

We make our metal work from nickel silver or titanium. Our sliding bands have an internal taper that fits perfectly over the tapered foot of a typical (Hardy) reel. In use, the band actually tightens and does not ever work loose. We only use down-sliding bands and butt caps, with olive wood spacers. The olive wood is our favourite. Very hard, stable and good looking, we cut it across the grain to emphasise the figuring. For 6½' to 8½' fly rods, we do not believe that any other reel fitting is necessary. This reel seat is light, effective and places the reel at the bottom of the rod.



*The pre-1939 Chicago built Logan lathe that we use for turning reel seat inserts, ferrule stoppers & cork handles.*



*Seasoned billets of Tuscan olive wood ready to be turned and shaped for reel seat fillers. Olive wood, cut across the grain, is all we use. It's incredibly hard, very highly figured and a feature of our fly rods.*

*Titanium butt caps, sliding reel bands & reel seat trims made by Colin. We also use nickel silver for reel seat metalwork.*



### Guides & Silks.

We used to use guides made by our friend the late Tom Moran. They were not plated and they had a pronounced pear shape, so they would groove, especially near the rod. The best guide profile, for obvious logical reasons, is round, and it should have a hard coating. For this reason, we now use Snake Brand Universal guides (the slightly concave underside of the feet is not a problem on a bamboo rod). The best tip rings made by anyone are Sea Guide round loop, but these have an excessively large loop in sizes 4.5 upwards, so we then use Snake Brand tips. The best butt rings (stripping guide if you're American) we have used are the Mildrum SRMC and the agate lined guides made by Ernest Oczos of Poland.

We whip (wrap if you are American) rings and ferrules with Pearsall's silk, which we believe is the best. We apply six turns of even finer silk to the end of each ring whipping for decoration.

### Varnishing

I varnish the whippings with an Italian varnish, and then apply varnish to the whole rod with a brush. This varnish is also Italian. You will not find any runs or dust in the finish of our rods. I could tell you how I do it, but that would not help. The finish on our rods is the result of experience, and this you will have to obtain for yourself, or use a dip tank, which I recommend! No epoxy finish is used at any stage. Epoxy is bulky and problematic to remove when a whipping needs to be replaced.

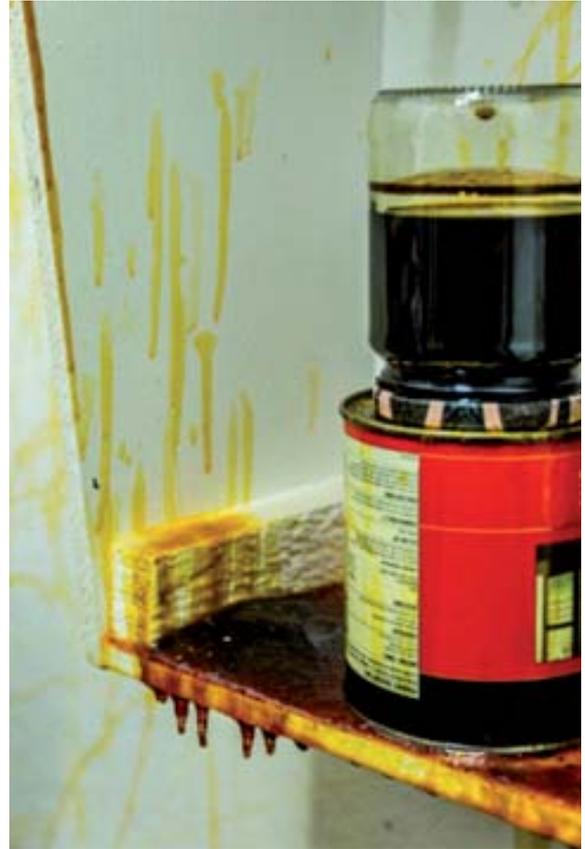
We prefer varnish to impregnation. Varnish provides an effective protective coating over the all-important fibres of the bamboo. When applied correctly and fully cured, a varnish finish does not detrimentally effect the rod's performance, and it can be removed and renewed when necessary.





*The varnishing cabinets  
in which whippings are varnished.*

*I'm very secretive about varnishing.  
Nobody is allowed to see the process, so here is a glimpse of a  
small corner of my varnishing room. We boast that our rods  
have a flawless finish, and so they do.  
I trust that this picture tells you very little. We have to  
preserve our commercial edge, after all.*



### **Rod bags & leather cases**

Nowadays, we don't have silk bags made (sack or sock if you're American).

Our seamstress makes them from polyester-cotton. Our rod cases are made completely by hand using full grain English cow hide. The lady who does this also works at Buckingham Palace. Her leatherwork is of the highest pedigree.



The rod I have bought with me has landed well over 1,800 trout. It was made at a time when we couldn't get hold of Mildrum butt rings and nobody was making agate lined rings, so I used a Fuji, which is great but I don't like it on a bamboo rod. The tip rings were rather heavy, from Hopkins & Holloway. I use lighter rings now. Apart from a few marks on the bamboo, the nodes are fractionally larger than I achieve now and there is some wear and tear. Otherwise, the rod represents a fairly typical example of one of our fly rods. I think it casts very nicely at close to medium distance -30' - 45'.

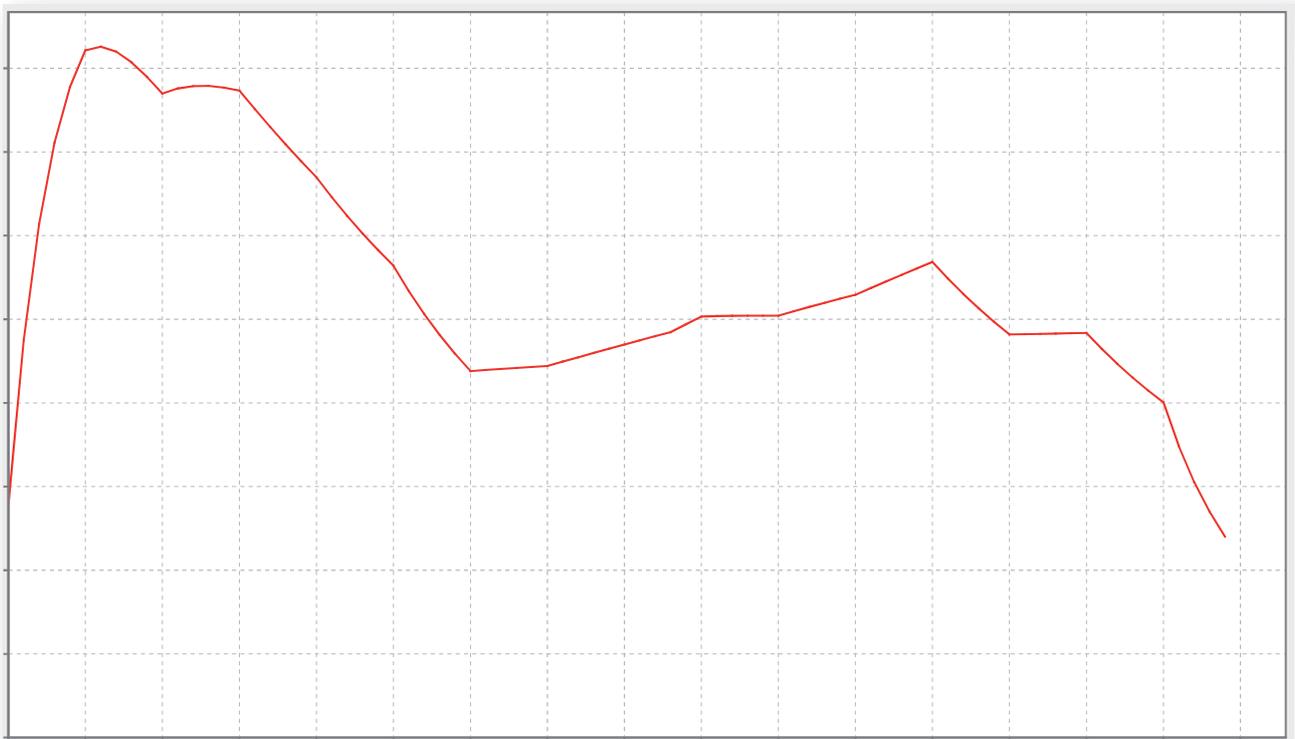
#### **A note on hollow-building.**

We don't hollow-build fly rods. In my opinion, the sweet spot for split bamboo, where it really excels, is in rods from 6½' to 8½' for lines from #3 to #5. I have not yet been convinced that the small saving in weight achieved by hollow building such rods is necessary or desirable.

Despite several very erudite and closely researched papers expounding the virtues of hollow built rods, I like the reassuring reliability and simplicity (from a commercial rod building point of view) of solid built rods. I don't doubt that longer fly rods than we favour in split cane are better when hollow-built, but this is an area outside my personal and professional interest.

As we also make many rods for English-style bait fishing (known in the UK as coarse fishing) that are 10' - 12' long, some of which we do hollow build, it is a concept I am very familiar with. For these rods, where a meaningful weight saving of at least 10% is possible, hollow-building is valid and we use a Winston-style fluting method.





what rod is it?

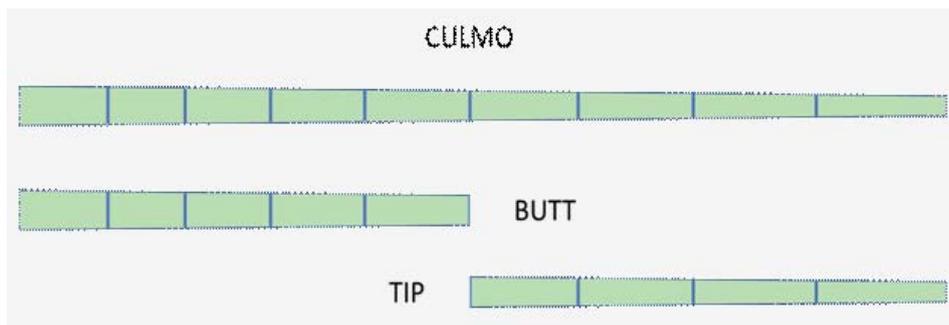
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# FROM THE SACRED TO THE PROFANE... TO THE DIABOLICAL

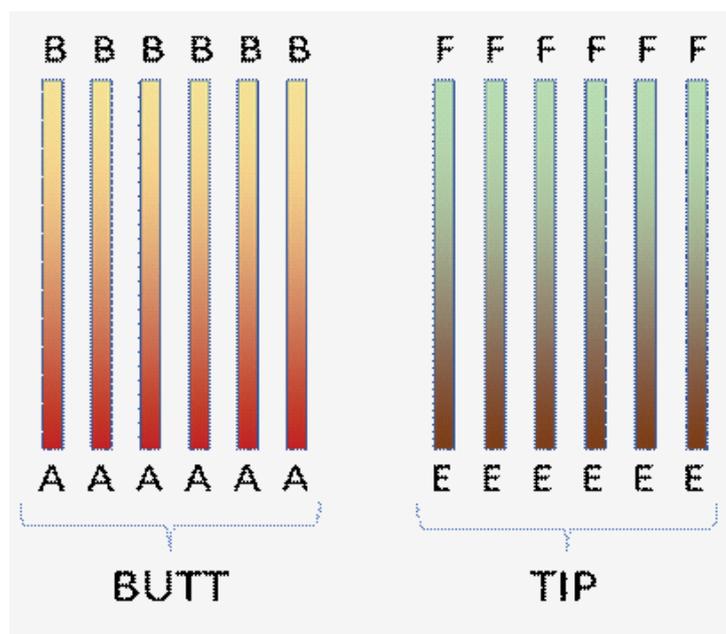


by Oscar Ferri

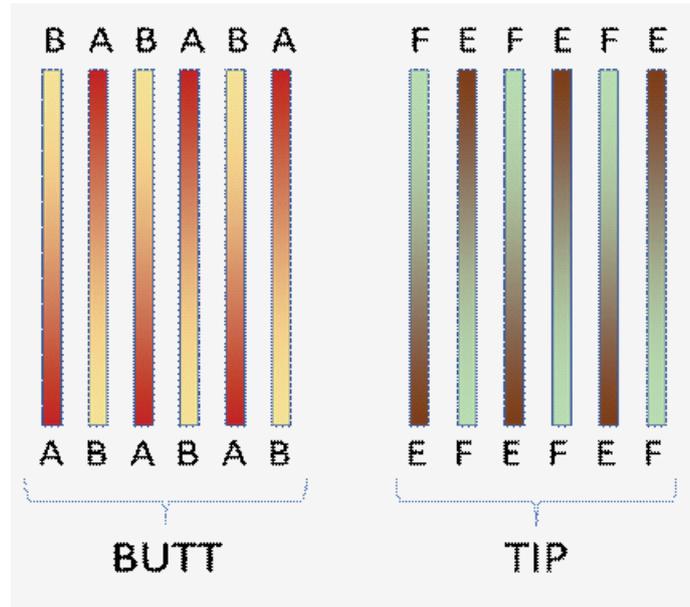
I don't remember exactly when it happened, but it is clear to me that it all started with the thought of a new rod, so sitting on my think tank I mentally went over the phases from the very beginning. So, as the SACRED teaching says, take the culm, cut it according to the nodes so as to have the section that starts from the heel for the butt and the following section for the tip



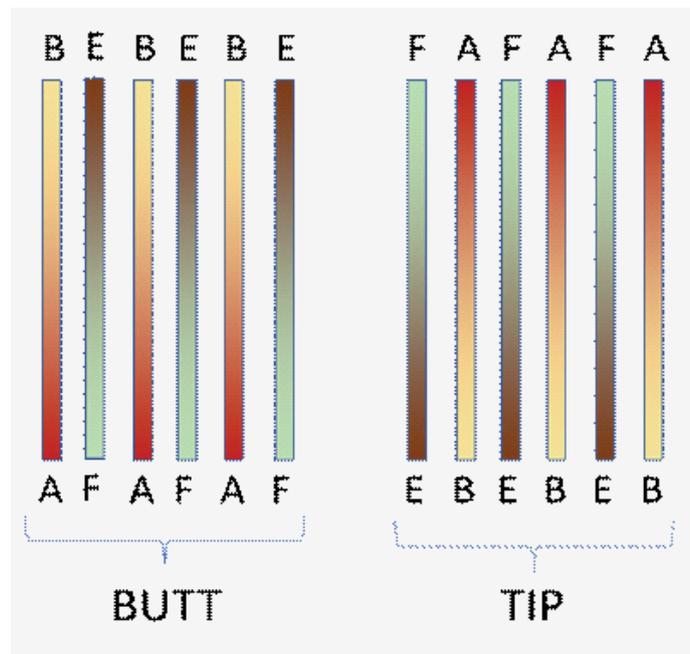
In this case the BUTT is A-B and the TIP is E-F, and here the SACRED ends and the PROFANE begins as my thoughts shift to the program for the design of the tapers which, in order to calculate the stress, attributes a constant to the Bamboo structure given by the power fibres. We all know that the distribution is not constant, but starts thicker from the heel, tapering as you go towards the top.



So, I thought of taking the classic strip arrangement and transforming it into a sequence where half of the strips are arranged in the classic direction and the other half I put upside down in order to have three strips with the part with more power fibres combined with the part with less power fibres. This allows you to have a constant that is better and closer to the calculation that the design program performs.



At this point, not happy with the PROFANE, I went to the DIABOLICAL. Not happy with the distribution of the power fibres reached, as the number of power fibres was not uniform enough between the BUTT and the TIP, I had this "little thought":



So, I put three strips of the tip with three strips of the butt and three strips of the butt I put them with the tips making sure that the parts with less power fibres are associated with the part with more power fibres. In my opinion, by doing this, the best consistency of power fibres is reached in order to get closer to the theoretical design. At least I've been doing this for years!

*Note on the nodes*

*Regarding the nodes and their distribution, nothing changes compared to the traditional and personal way of how it has always been done: the staggering three by three by three occurs automatically.*



what rod is it?

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# WOOD FOR ROD MAKING

by M.O.G, Marco Orlando Giardina

No, don't get me wrong. I have no intention of taking a leap back in time and history and finding myself more than a century and a half ago. In fact, back then it was "before bamboo" and the fly-fishing rods were actually made of wood. Dame Juliana Berners as early as 1400 in her "The Boke of St. Albans" deals with how to make a fly-fishing rod, followed two centuries later by Izaak Walton with his "The Compleat Angler". Incidentally, if you haven't read Walton's book, do it. It is fundamental. I recommend the latest edition which also contains the writing of Charles Cotton, Walton's friend and brother in fishing.

Times when rods were built with native woods using the same technique used to make arrows. But we could discuss this another time!

The modern English colonial empire was born in the 19th century. After the initial industrial revolution, the audience of well-off and rich expands, what until then had been an activity for a few, assumes considerable proportions, the birth of the railways allows rapid and comfortable travel in the countryside towards the south of England and towards the rivers of the northwest. Fishing and especially fly fishing become popular with gentlemen. Clubs are formed and books are published that introduce the neophyte to the noble fishing activity.

A very interesting book published in the second half of the 19th century by Henry Cholmondeley-Pennell - an incredibly prolific English author - is "Modern Improvement in Fishing Tackle and Fish Hooks" which well describes the change of vision of English society: the Empire allows to import on the island the best products in the world and among these also the wood of exotic trees with characteristics that cannot be found in national products. This is how previously unimaginable woods appear on the market.

A perennial diatribe.

The table published by Henry P. Wells in his 1885 book "Fly-Rods and Fly-Tackle: suggestions as to their manufacture and use" is interesting. You can see that alongside dozens of exotic woods, there is also bamboo. It is not the *Arundinaria* (pardon, *Pseudosasa*) *Amabilis*, but the *Dendrocalamus Strictus*, that is Calcutta Bamboo, and since we are digressing - however believe me, I am not paid a lot by word! - I think you may be interested or intrigued in reading the table, noting that two types of bamboo use are indicated, the first using six strips and the enamel on the outside of the hexagon, the second with four square strips and the enamel inside; 137 years have passed and this is still being debated!

*Rods and Rod Material.*

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for the purpose of comparison. The cedar was from a very choice Florida specimen.

Material.	Specific Gravity.	Weight of 1 Cubic Foot.
Snakewood.....	1.3718	85.74
Beefwood.....	1.3090	81.81
Bethabara.....	1.2140	75.88
*Ironwood.....	1.176	73.50
*Ironbark.....	1.142	71.37
*Chow.....	1.116	69.75
Greenheart (dark-colored).....	1.0908	68.18
*Jucaro Prieto.....	1.08	67.30
Lancewood.....	1.0335	64.59
*Kranji.....	1.029	64.31
Split-bamboo : Six-strip hexagonal, rind outside	.9915	61.96
Bois d'Arc.....	.9690	60.56
Split-bamboo : Four-strip, rind inside.....	.9678	60.49
Greenheart (light-colored).....	.9643	60.26
*Dagame.....	.90	56.10
Shadblow.....	.8620	53.87
Paddlewood.....	.8363	52.27
Ironwood ( <i>Hornbeam</i> ).....	.8184	51.15
Hickory.....	.7963	49.77
Ash.....	.7786	48.66
*Pingow.....	.748	46.75
Mahoe.....	.6607	41.29
Cedar (Florida).....	.6396	39.98

Wanting to continue the digression, since you all already know the technique for building hexagonal rods very well, the use of bamboo for the four strip/enamel inside instead led to the creation of round rods. The four strips (internal enamel) were glued and the square was removed with a scraper with progressively smaller semi-circular external notches. A good hand was able to make the square round with a progressive streamlining of the diameter. Do you want to try?

Maybe with Greenheart wood. By the way, years ago a well-known American rodmaker, Larry Tusoni - among other things the author of my favourite software RodDNA - presented a hexagonal rod in Greenheart during an IBRA meeting. A well-made rod, a little heavy, that I didn't try casting much, as Roberto Pragliola told me one evening, with me casting was a meaningless option!

In any case, if you want to see an excellent example of how bamboo squares were made and rounded with scraper strokes, I suggest you watch these excellent Japanese documentaries on the construction of traditional bamboo rods on Youtube (<https://youtu.be/daA49C7OX-0>), ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj0-MVTB\\_Ms](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj0-MVTB_Ms)).

### **The little piece of wood**

Well, let's go to the real subject of this writing; the woods for the rodmaker. I actually mean that small piece of wood that some use to attach a reel to the rod, precisely the reel seat.

In reality, there is no obligation to make a wooden reel seat. For years, reel seats in Nickel Silver have been used, especially for rods of a certain quality, while others, such as Winston, chose lightweight plastic reel seats in the golden years of casting competitions. The fabulous Kosmic rods - built for Spalding by the fabulous quartet ex-Leonard Thomas, Edwards, Hawes and Payne - had an ivory reel seat. Perhaps the Golden Kosmic bamboo fly rod that won the Award of Highest Merit at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago had the reel seat in precious ivory, but also consider that all the hardware was in solid gold!

Many big name rodmakers, such as Jim Payne, have used wood for reel seats. Often quite common and inconspicuous woods. Payne, for example, used Port-Orford-Cedar (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*): Lawson's cypress is now commonly found in Italy, especially in the South, for reforestation and as plants for hedges in gardens.

Today, wood - and other materials - have become a somewhat manneristic, baroque enrichment to embellish bamboo rods. One may disagree, but this is the trend today. Some rodmakers even manage to use materials for this purpose that they would like to "amaze" the viewer. An example is the use of fossil mammoth teeth. Or even walrus ivory. Wanting to stay in the theme, I would propose the use of the bones / relics of a holy hermit from the 4th century. The astonishment would be absolute. What is certain is that we would be far from the idea of the functionality of using a rod for fly fishing!

### **Wood classification: important for understanding and purchasing.**

If you allow me, I would like to make a small "point of order" before continuing.

I am interested in and mainly collect tropical woods. This is because the wood is particularly beautiful and has excellent mechanical and "behavioural" characteristics.

According to the study published by PNAS The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, there are 73,000 species of trees on Earth, with a particular, strong diversity especially in South America.

Yet each known species has its own name and surname.

For this we should thank Carl Nilsson Linnaeus called Carlo Linneo in Italian, Swedish physician, botanist, naturalist and academic, born and lived in the eighteenth century, considered the father of the modern scientific classification of living organisms. Using the binomial method introduced by Linnaeus, each species has its own specific, unmistakable name.

Where to get tropical woods? Of course, from the Internet! Unless you have a seller of wood for craftsmanship near your home, perhaps for violin making. The point is that in Italy it is easier to know the origin of the cherry tomatoes and their specific name in a supermarket than to have information on their origin and species in a craft wood shop.

Common names are generic and often random. Under the name Bois de Rose, for example, they peddle everything.

This does not change with the majority of national online sellers: in addition to the uncertainty of the name, the certainty of what you are buying is also lacking. The photo that perhaps adorns the offer of a given wood is not that of the piece that will arrive.

Therefore, it is my suggestion: use the scientific name to indicate the species and be wary of sellers who do not put the photo of the piece you are buying online.

To simplify things, I suggest you download the Name Wood Database program which you can download here ([http://www.hobbitthouseinc.com/wood\\_name\\_database/](http://www.hobbitthouseinc.com/wood_name_database/)). It is part of a nice and useful site <http://hobbitthouseinc.com/personal/woodpics/>. It is a true "sum" of knowledge about woods. It is certainly one of my favourites in terms of woods.

The site <https://www.wood-database.com/> is certainly important. The author of the site, Eric Meyer, is also the author of an excellent book for learning about woods.

My favourite pushers - the ones that have 'good stuff' - are in the US: Griffin Exotic Wood (<https://exoticwood.biz/>), Cook Woods ([www.cookwoods.com](http://www.cookwoods.com)) and Bell Forest Products, Inc. ([www.bellforestproducts.com](http://www.bellforestproducts.com)). In Germany, great products and great service from Feines Holz ([www.feinesholz.de](http://www.feinesholz.de)). With these sellers you buy what you see in the picture.

Obviously, I have no financial or personal connection with these commercial structures. Just for clarity. An alternative is to attend the exhibitions and market shows dedicated to knifemakers. Often there are sellers of woods and often of excellent quality.

### Where does the wood come from

Just a brief hint to refresh ideas and knowledge.

Let's finally talk about wood.

What is a tree, who it is and how it is made.

A tree is a perennial woody plant, capable of growing in height thanks to a woody stem, called a "trunk". The presentation is a bit self-evident: I don't think anyone has never seen a tree, unless he was born and has always lived in Greenland!

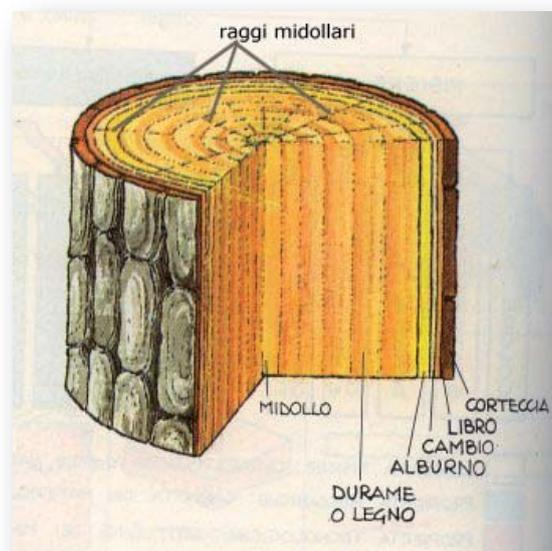
Trees are divided into two broad categories, Gymnosperms and Angiosperms.

Gymnosperms are very common plants such as juniper, maritime pine, common pine and stone pine and, again, silver and red fir and larch. But also, the Sequoia, the tallest trees known. They are all arboreal or shrubby plants that are recognized by their needle-like leaves and the presence of those commonly referred to as "pine cones", used by the plant to contain the seed exposed to the external environment. They do not have a differentiation between sapwood and heartwood.

On the contrary, angiosperms have flowers and fruits that protect the seed from contact with the environment. In angiosperms the differentiation between sapwood and heartwood is well present and evident.

But let's see how the trunk is made inside.

From the drawing of the section of a trunk, it is possible to notice, starting from the bark, a series of anatomical elements.



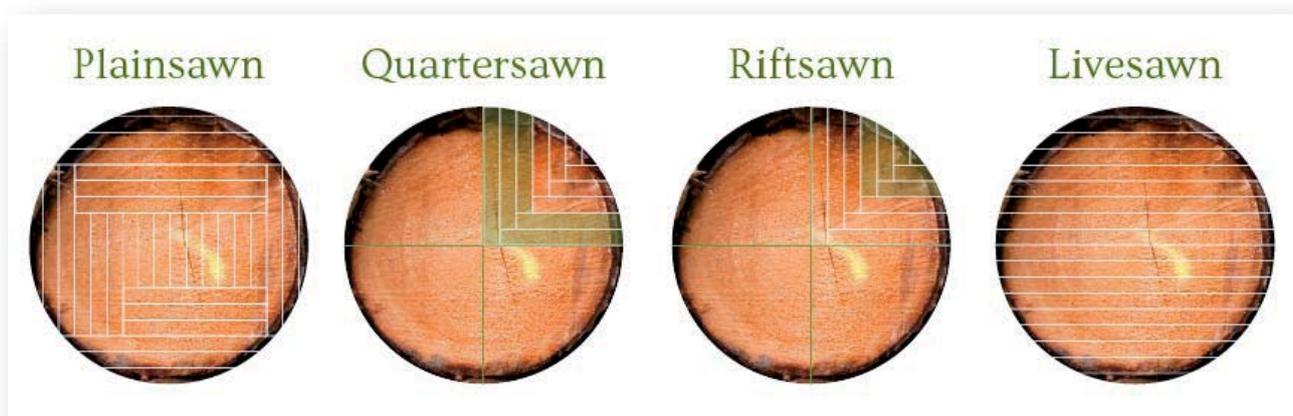
The bark is the outer covering, the armour the tree is equipped with to protect it from external dangers. The phloem, is very thin, serves to protect the tree from external humidity. Immediately after we have the Cambium. The Cambium is the area in which the new wood is created that allows the tree to grow, creates new fibres every year, both inwards to form the sapwood or xylem, and outwards to form the cambium.

At this point, the growth rings that form the Sapwood and heartwood start.

The sapwood (xylem) is made up of living plant cells in which the lymph is transported. The heartwood is the thickest area of the trunk and has the same function as the skeleton in the human body. It is what keeps the tree standing! Other important elements present in the design are the Medullary Rays, which bring nutrients into the trunk and the rays. The latter are streaks with a shiny appearance, irregular in shape and of a different colour compared to the background. They are an effect linked to Medullary Rays and their presence in the wood is highly sought after because, depending on the cut, it produces very interesting aesthetic effects (*Translator's note: figuring*).

### Wood cutting.

Speaking of the cut, this influences not just the aesthetic, but also the economic, performance of the wood. There are three main cutting modes: Plainsawn, Quartersawn and Riftsawn. From the drawing it is easy to understand that the first type is the one that allows the least waste of material and the greatest economic yield. With Plainsawn it is almost impossible to determine the final aesthetic result. Quartersawn allows a quasi-orthogonal cut to the growth rings, has greater waste, but, with certain types of wood, gives aesthetically remarkable results. Riftsawn is the extremization of the Quarter, the cut is strictly orthogonal and the aesthetic result is flawless. It is the least used!



**Hardness of wood.**

A quick note: The hardness of wood is measured through Janka's test. It is a test that measures the resistance of wood to denting. The test measures the force that a steel sphere with a diameter of 11.28 millimetres requires in order to penetrate half of its volume into the wood under test.

The hardness of wood is specifically related to density. The denser and tighter the wood fibres, the harder the wood. Hardwood fibres tend to be very compact and close together, which results in less elasticity and compression of the fibres.

**Characteristics of some woods.**

A brief parenthesis to describe some characteristics concerning particularities of some woods.

*Burl Wood*

The Burl is given by a defence mechanism of the tree which, when attached to the bark, develops tissue to incorporate the threat and isolate it from the rest of the trunk. This defensive reaction is carried out against attacks by viruses, bacteria and fungi, as well as wounds to the cortex. Burls developing around rifle bullets have also been found.

The process that produces the roots is similar, but takes place on the root system of some essences.

Burls can grow on many tree species and can be of many sizes... even sooooo big!



### **Spalted wood, or rotten wood!**

Many trees are attacked by fungi. Especially when they are subjected to severe stress that lowers their defensive skills. Obviously, the fungal attack is maximum if the tree has hit the ground. Sad thing, but also very natural. A large tree that collapses in a forest will nourish the ground for many years, the open space since its fall will provide light and space for the growth and development of new trees and above all will allow the renewal process of the forest itself.

The fungal attack leads to structural and aesthetic changes in the wood.

Spalting can produce three phenomena in wood:

- Pigmentation, causing the wood to change colour, especially with bluish or pink tones.
- Rot, especially with colour tones ranging from white to cream.
- Lines that delimit areas of the wood. Red, brown or black.

This last type is the most interesting. The wood is crossed by a mosaic of polygons that make the wood unique and unusual. Obviously, this phenomenon of decay makes the wood fragile and delicate. It is essential to strengthen the wood by stabilizing it.

### **My woods.**

I must start by saying that in particular I love the woods of the Dalbergia genus. Dalbergias are trees that grow in tropical and equatorial belts, America, Africa and Asia. In my opinion they produce a very beautiful wood, hard and easy to work on the lathe. It has a strong presence of oily substances inside that make gluing difficult.

Be careful when buying Dalbergia wood (but this applies to many woods, not only tropical), because the Dalbergia are included in the Appendix II of the CITES and therefore subject to a complex series of regulations.

Just scrolling through the list that appears on Wikipedia in English, the Dalbergia species listed are about three hundred.



But we will not only talk about Dalbergias. However, since this writing is not an encyclopaedia, nor a manual, I will tell you about the woods that I like, that I use and that I collect.

Here are my nine favourites:

Dalbergia caerensis  
 Dalbergia cultrata  
 Darbergia decipularis  
 Dalbergia latifolia  
 Dalbergia melanoxilon  
 Dalbergia nigra  
 Dalbergia retusa  
 Dalbergia sisso  
 Dalbergia stevensoni

### **Dalbergia caerensis**

Commercial name: Kingwood (eng)

Origin: Brazil.

Tree height: 30-60 ft (10-20 m)

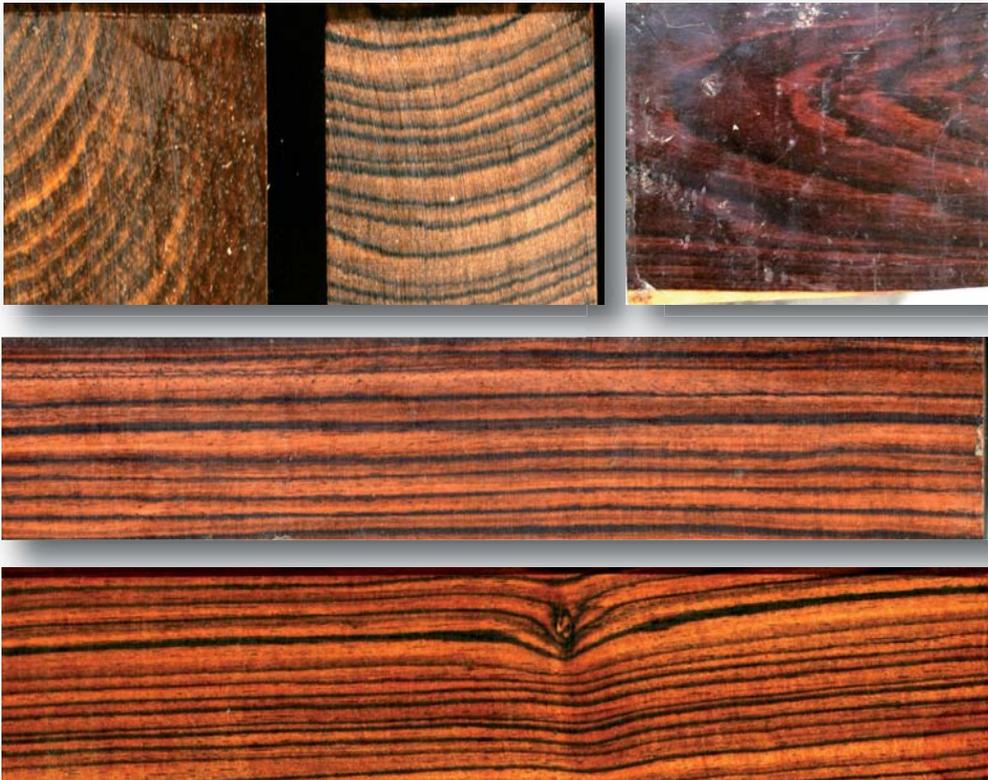
Average dry wood weight: 75 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1,200 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 3,340 lbf (17,240 N)

A wonderful wood. The distinct colours of the fibres range from violet to orange, black and all shades of brown.

Easy to turn, even if it requires perfectly sharp tools. Much used in the past in high-level cabinet making.

Together with Dalbergia Nigra it is my favourite essence.



***Dalbergia cultrata***

Commercial name: Khampi (eng)

Origin: Southeast Asia

Tree height: 65-100 ft (20-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 66 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1,060 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 3,350 lbf (14,900 N)

It is one of the lesser known Dalbergias in the West, while in its places of origin it is highly appreciated and used. The colours of the heartwood vary within the brown shades. Hard in texture, it lends itself well to lathe work. Widely used for xylophone keys.

***Dalbergia decipularis/frutescens***

Commercial name: Tulipwood (eng)

Origin: north-eastern Brazil

Tree height: 20-30 ft (6-9 m)

Average dry wood weight: 60 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (970 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,500 lbf (11,120 N)

It is a little out of the classic standards of Dalbergias. The colour is light, sometimes with pink tones. It is not an extremely hard wood, but it goes well with light rods.

Very figured.



**Dalbergia latifolia**

Commercial name: East India Rosewood (eng)

Origin: India, Sri Lanka, and Indonesia

Tree height: 100 ft (30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 52 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (830 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,440 lbf (10,870 N)

Like all Dalbergias it is included in CITES Appendix II, therefore it is subject to restrictions on trade and production. However, compared to other species it is much easier to find on the market. Widely used in the production of musical instruments such as acoustic guitars. Excellent workability and the creation of pieces on the lathe.

**Dalbergia melanoxylon**

Commercial name: African Blackwood (eng)

Origin: South Central Africa

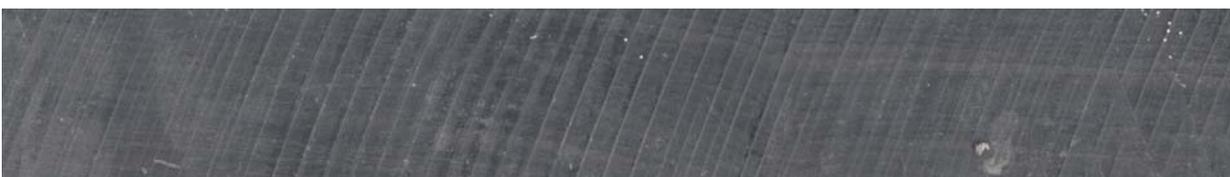
Tree height: 20-30 ft (6-9 m)

Average dry wood weight: 79 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1,270 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 3,670 lbf (16,320 N)

It is another of my favourite essences. The wood is black, but it is a non-compact black like Ebony. Black is often crossed by veins of violet and deep red. It can also be a deep brown colour. For flamed and dark-toned rods, it accentuates their drama.

On the other hand, my rods have always been defined as "sad" and the Dalbergia Melanoxylon helps! For processing it requires well-sharpened tools.



**Dalbergia nigra**

Commercial name: Brazilian Rosewood (eng)

Origin: Brazil

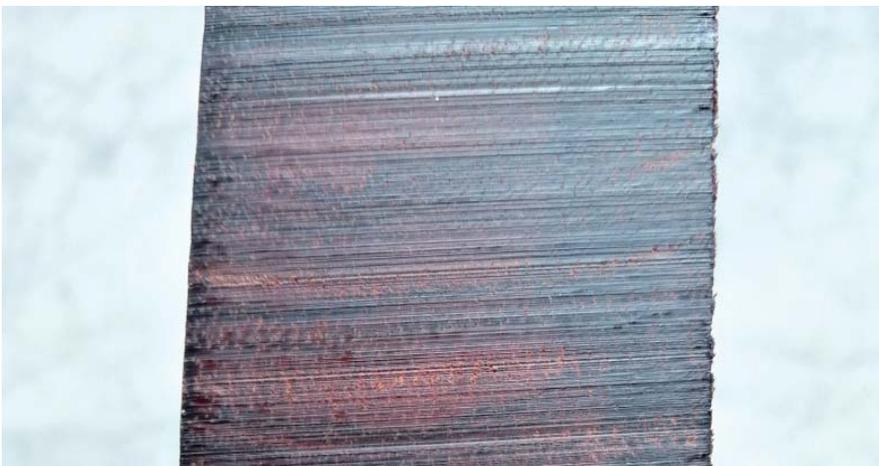
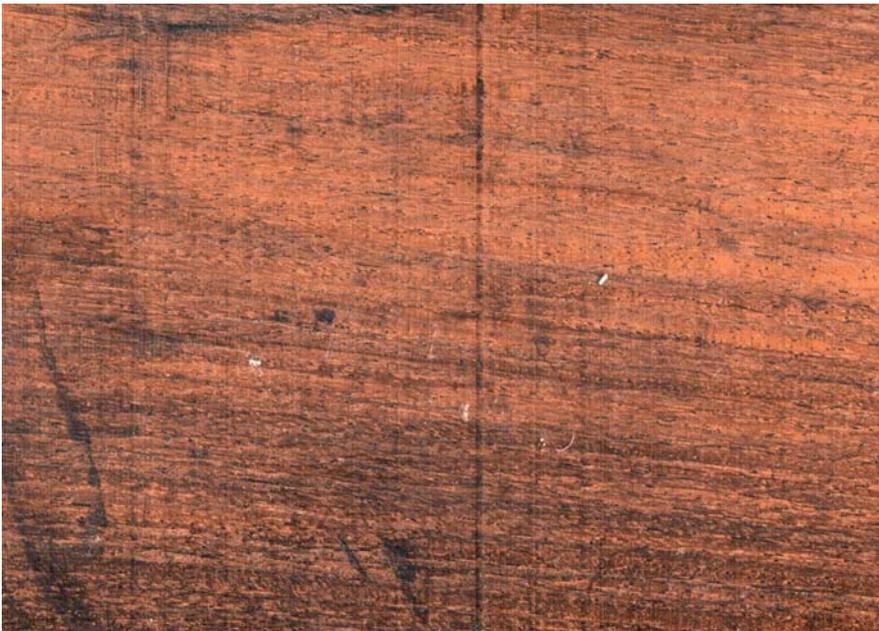
Tree height: 100-130 ft (30-40 m)

Average dry wood weight: 52 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (835 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,790 lbf (12,410 N)

The top of the Dalbergias is in my view the top of woods for cabinet making.

The heartwood is dark, but interspersed with iridescent shades and soft lighting. A real marvel for the eyes. Perfect workability. The wood is dense with oiliness and difficult to glue. Royal French cabinet-making has benefited from the existence of this wood by creating furniture of the highest level. Very difficult to find on the market. But if you can, it's worth it.



***Dalbergia retusa***

Commercial name: Cocobolo (eng)

Origin: Central America

Tree height: 45-60 ft (14-18 m)

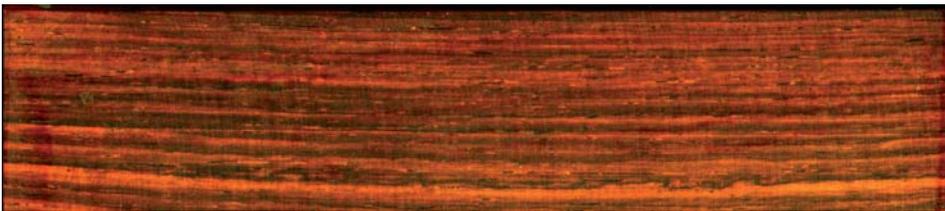
Average dry wood weight: 69 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1.095 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,960 lbf (14,140 N).

It is a beautiful wood. Until a few years ago it was not difficult to find on the market.

With the over-exploitation of forests, its availability has drastically reduced.

In Mexico, the production area par excellence, sustainable production projects have been put in place and are managed by local communities.



**Dalbergia sisso**

Commercial name: Sisso (eng)

Origin: India, Nepal, and Pakistan

Tree height: 35-65 ft (10-20 m)

Average dry wood weight: 48 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (770 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1,660 lbf (7,380 N)

Marketing is not widespread in the West, while in the countries of origin it is intensively used to build furniture, boats and household items.

It is also known by the name of Sheesham.

**Dalbergia stevensonii**

Commercial name: Honduras Rosewood (eng)

Origin: Belize, Honduras

Tree height: 50-100 ft (15-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 64 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1.025 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,200 lbf (9,790 N)

Another wood of great value. Beautiful colours and tones. Rare. Widely used for guitar making. The result is amazing rod inserts.



### Precautions

*Before continuing to describe other essences, I would like to talk about the health risks associated with the use and processing of wood, of all tropical woods, but in particular of Dalbergias.*

*Above all, Dalbergias are known for their allergenic capacity, through inhalation or even just the contact of dust and sawdust. In particularly sensitive people, even contact with untreated wood can lead to an allergic reaction.*

*Therefore, I would like to emphasize the importance of using effective protective systems such as masks, gloves and goggles.*

*Remember that many European essences are also allergenic.*

### Acacia koa

Commercial name: Koa (eng)

Origin: Hawaii

Tree height: 65-100 ft (20-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 38 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (610 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1170 lbf (5180 N)

Beautiful wood that grows in the Hawaiian Islands. Very figured, often with beautiful golden motifs which, thanks to the medullary rays, cross orthogonally the structure of the fibres. Easily workable. Market prices are not excessive, but obviously they vary according to the beauty of the piece.



**Acer macrophyllum (spalted)**

Commercial name: Bigleaf Acer (eng)

Origin: North America

Tree height: 80-115 ft (20-35 m)

Average dry wood weight: 44 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (705 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1450 lbf (6450 N)

Very common in North America. Some species are cultivated for the production of maple syrup. The Macrophiylum often produces a very figured wood and is therefore particularly appreciated for the construction of electric guitars. If the wood is "Spalted", it produces striking and unique designs in the wood. Easy to work after careful stabilization.



**Afzelia xilocarpa**

Commercial name: Afzelia (eng)

Origin: Africa and South East Asia

Tree height: 80-120 ft (25-357m)

Average dry wood weight: 50 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (805 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1810 lbf (8050 N)

A wood of great durability and resistance to time. Much used for his splendid burls. Great for turning jobs.

**Aesculus flava**

Commercial name: Buckeye burl (eng)

Origin: East of the USA

Tree height: 50-75 ft (15-23 m)

Average dry wood weight: 25 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1.025 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 350 lbf (1560 N)

A wonderful wood. The individual pieces are rarely the same. Great variability of colours. The wood is soft and light. What interests its users is the briar, large and capable of taking on a rich combination of tones and colours. Shades of brown, light cream, blue, green, purple. It is good practice to stabilize the wood.

Cutting the briar can create problems: often the root incorporates stones and other hard objects that can damage the cutting blades.



**Borassus flabellifer**

Commercial name: Black Palm (eng)

Origin: Asia and tropical Africa

Tree height: 40-65 ft (20-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 44 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (705 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2240 lbf (9920 N)

Two types of palm are easily found on the market, the Black Palm, used for the production of syrup and sugar, and the Red Palm, the coconut palm.

Both are easy to find. The black palm is, in my opinion, preferable because its very evident fibrous structure gives a greater "drama" to the finished object. When making inserts it is worthwhile to highlight this element, for example by not inserting a cap at the end of the inserts, but by leaving the final fibres of the wood visible.

**Brosimum guianensis**

Commercial name: Snakewood (eng)

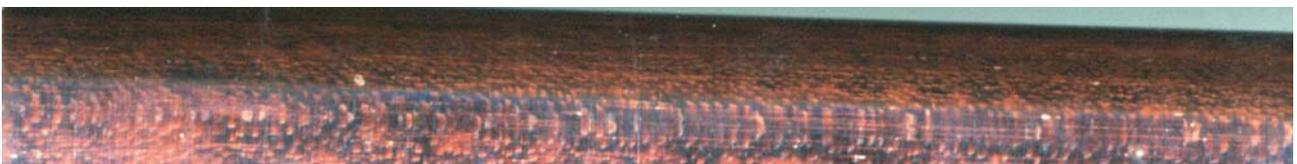
Origin: Guaiana

Tree height: 60-80 ft (20-25 m)

Average dry wood weight: 76 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1210 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 3800 lbf (16900 N)

It is a small tree with a limited distribution area, this makes it particularly expensive and quite difficult to find. It is particularly appreciated for its heartwood design that resembles the skin of a snake. The non-figured pieces are sold as Amourette and have a much lower cost. It is not easy to work with due to the density of the wood.



**Bulnesia sarmentoi**

Commercial name: Lignum Vitae Argentine (eng)

Origin: Central and South America

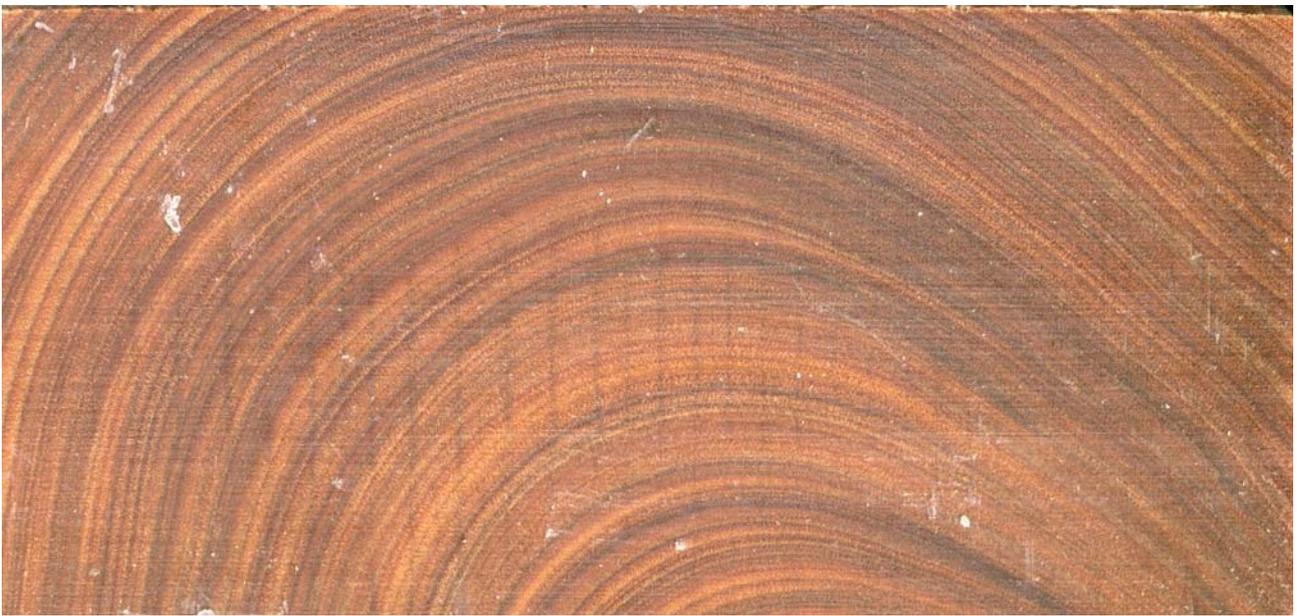
Tree height: 40-50 ft (12-15 m)

Average dry wood weight: 74 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1190kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 3710 lbf (16510 N)

We could say that it is the poor relative of the Lignum Vitae. Obviously, it has no relationship with the genus Guaiacum, but it has some structural characteristics in common: it is a particularly heavy, very hard wood. Used in the same fields of use as Guaiacum Officinalis, excluding medicinal use as it has no curative elements in its structure. Like Guaiacum it is in CITES Appendix II.

Beautiful in appearance, when cut it takes on a very pleasant greenish colour.

**Casuarina equisetifolia**

Commercial name: Burma Ironwood (eng)

Origin: from Burma to Australia

Tree height: 20-115 ft (6-35 m)

Average dry wood weight: 64 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1.025 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,200 lbf (9,790 N)

Hard wood with excellent workability, especially on the lathe.



**Cinnamomum camphora**

Commercial name: Camphora (eng)

Origin: Southeast Asia

Tree height: 65-100 ft (20-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 33 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (520 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 950 lbf (4440 N)

Scented wood with particular wood variations. The scent of this essence is very appreciable.

**Cordia spp**

Commercial name: Bocote (eng)

Origin: Central and South America

Tree height: 65-100 ft (20-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 53 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (855 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,000 lbf (8950 N)

A wood with a wide range of shades of brown, from light olive to dark brown to black. It tends to darken over time. However, this trend is typical of many other woods, including the Dalbergias. Easy to work with, holds well when glued.



**Entandrophragma congoense**

Commercial name: Sapele (eng)

Origin: tropical Africa

Tree height: 100-150 ft (30-45 m)

Average dry wood weight: 42 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (670 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1410 lbf (6280 N)

Beautiful wood that is easy to find. It has characteristics similar to those of mahogany and like mahogany it is obtained for lathe work and cabinet making.

**Erica arborea**

Commercial name: Briar (eng)

Origin: Mediterranean basin, East Africa

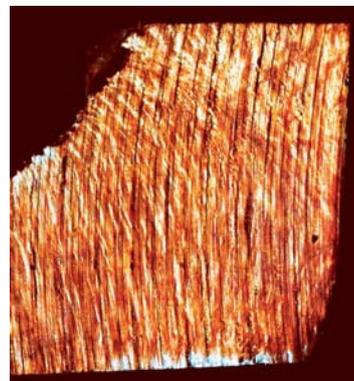
Tree height: 8-13 ft (2.5-4 m)

Average dry wood weight: 57 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (920 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2090 lbf (9300 N)

The plant mainly uses the hypertrophic root of the specimens that have developed an enlargement as large as a soccer ball. It is the wood of choice for pipe manufacturers.

For its beauty, the Erica Arborea was brilliantly used by Giorgio Dallari for his wonderful reels, true masterpieces. A craftsman / artist who is missing today.



**Fraxinus nigra (Burl)**

Commercial name: Black Ash (eng.)

Origin: USA and Canada

Tree height: 50-65 ft (15-20 m)

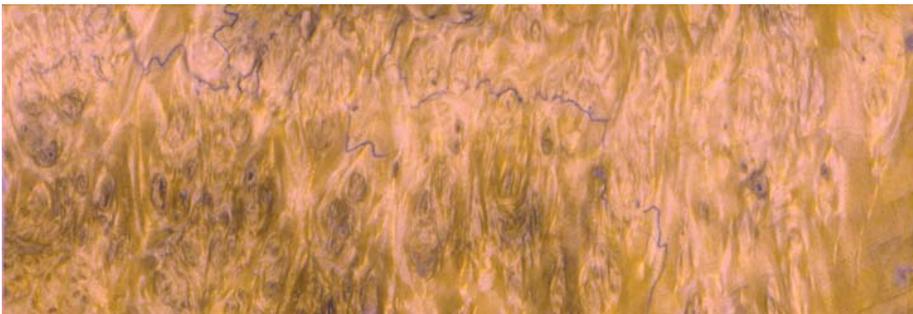
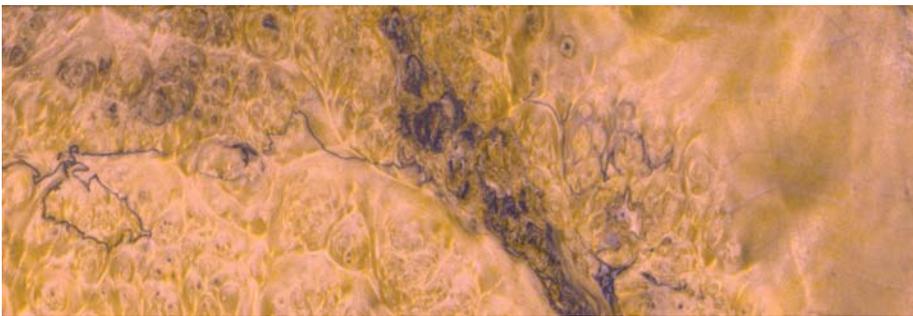
Average dry wood weight: 34 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (545 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 850 lbf (3780 N)

Widely used for the construction of electric guitars.

The burl is often adorned with “partridge eye” figures.

As can be seen from the Janka Hardness value, it is not a particularly compact wood, therefore it is preferably used after a stabilization process. This makes it more solid and easier to work with.



**Guayacum officinale**

Commercial name: Lignum Vitae (eng)

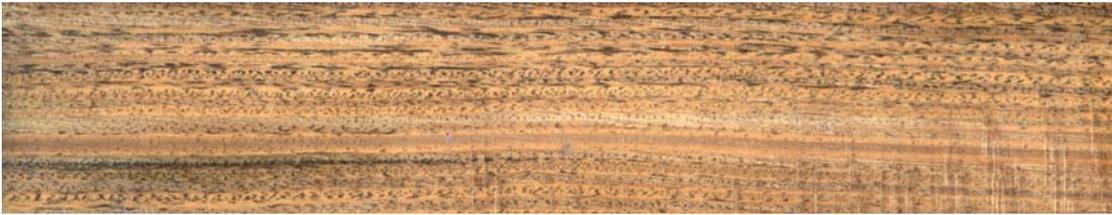
Origin: Central and South America

Tree height: 20-30 ft (6-10 m)

Average dry wood weight: 79 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1260 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 4390 lbf (19510 N)

Now rare wood, included in Appendix II Cites due to a centuries-old use for therapeutic purposes. It is also widely used for its mechanical resistance qualities and for its self-lubrication capacity due to the oils that impregnate the wood. It was used extensively to build propeller shaft bearings for steamships. It was also used for the construction of compasses for the hinges of the locks of the Panama Canal. A wood of great quality and workability.

**Guibourtia Arnoldiana**

Commercial name: Bubinga (eng)

Origin: Equatorial Africa

Tree height: 130-150 ft (40-45 m)

Average dry wood weight: 56 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (400 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,400 lbf (10720 N)

Widely used in cabinet making due to its beauty, workability and its easy availability on the international market. Relatively low costs.



**Juglans hindsii**

Commercial name: Claro Walnut (eng)

Origin: West of the USA

Tree height: 30-600 ft (9-18 m)

Average dry wood weight: 40 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (640 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1130 lbf (5030 N)

Hard wood, well workable. A classic of cabinet making.

It is also used for the creation of the highest quality rifle butts.

Variegated wood with beautiful designs. Perfect for an oil or wax polish. Even better if used for an Orushi paint job.

**Lagerstroemia fluribunda**

Commercial name: Pinyinma (eng)

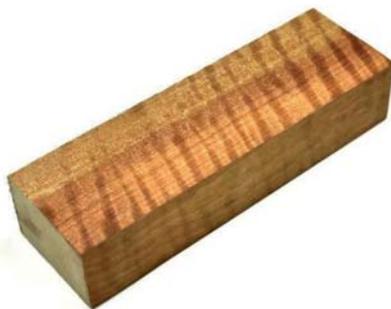
Origin: Southeast Asia

Tree height: 50-100 ft (15-30 m)

Average dry wood weight: 64 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1.025 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1090 lbf (4850 N)

A beautiful thick wood figured by curly bands of medullary rays that create unique and aesthetically pleasing figures. Soft and light wood, it lends itself well to being stabilized. Easily available



**Microberlinia brazzavillensis**

Commercial name: Zebrawood (eng)

Origin: West Africa

Tree height: 65-130 ft (20-40 m)

Average dry wood weight: 50 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (805 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1830 lbf (8160 N)

Not easy to work especially in planing due to the different consistency of the fibres that are interspersed with each other.

Aesthetically very pleasing. The aesthetic result depends a lot on the type of cut - Quartersawn is widely used - and on subsequent processing.

**Olneya tesota**

Commercial name: Arizona Ironwood (eng)

Origin: North Mexico and South West USA

Tree height: 20-30 ft (6-10 m)

Average dry wood weight: 75 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1210 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 3260 lbf (14500 N)

It is a wood that is particularly appreciated in the world of knife-making for its hardness, stability and beauty. The pattern of its fibrous structure, the colours inside and the compactness of the material make it perfect for building knife handles. Why not use it for fishing rod handles?



**Peltogine purpurea**

Commercial name: Purpleheart, Amarant (eng)

Origin: from Mexico to Brazil

Tree height: 100-170 ft (30-50 m)

Average dry wood weight: 56 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (905kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,200 lbf (9,790 N)

A good wood. Excellent workability. It often misleads the buyer: freshly cut it has a beautiful purple colour, attractive and unusual that drives us to purchase it. Over time the purple colour is replaced by a not ugly but certainly less attractive reddish / burgundy. However appreciable.

**Pterocarpus indicus (Burl)**

Commercial name: Amboyna (eng)

Origin: Southeast Asia

Tree height: 100-130 ft (30-40 m)

Average dry wood weight: 47 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (745 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 1970 lbf (8,790 N)

A wood of incredible beauty. For high-level objects and creations. Not easy to work due to its burl nature which creates a widespread inconsistency between the fibres and which makes planing difficult and requires extremely sharp tools.



**Sequoia sempervirens**

Commercial name: Redwood (eng)

Origin: USA from Central California to Oregon

Tree height: 200-300 ft (60-90 m)

Average dry wood weight: 26 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (415 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 450 lbf (2000 N)

It is a monumental tree, in the company of its co-family Giant Sequoia, which can live for over 2000 years. It is present only along the west coast of the USA.

It is a protected and endangered species. Especially for the massive deforestation of the nineteenth century and in the first part of the twentieth. The cut is currently limited. It is possible to find pieces of Redwood on the market in good quantity that are obtained from the scraps of the 19th century cutting operations abandoned on the ground. A way to continue the use of this wood without affecting its heritage.

The colour is reddish, easy to work with, it has excellent directional stability. The burls are very beautiful. Now rare and expensive.



**Tamarindus indica (spalted)**

Commercial name: Tamarind (eng)

Origin: tropical Africa

Tree height: 50-80 ft (15-24 m)

Average dry wood weight: 53 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (850 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2690 lbf (11970 N)

Better known for its fruits and the products made from it, Tamarind wood is rarely used, except in the “spalted” version, with complex and attractive designs. As in all “spalted” woods, a stabilization of the wood is essential.

**Xylia xilocarpa**

Commercial name: Laos Ironwood (eng)

Origin: Southeast Asia

Tree height: 75-120 ft (25-35 m)

Average dry wood weight: 70 lbs / ft<sup>3</sup> (1125 kg / m<sup>3</sup>)

Janka hardness: 2,250 lbf (9,900 N)

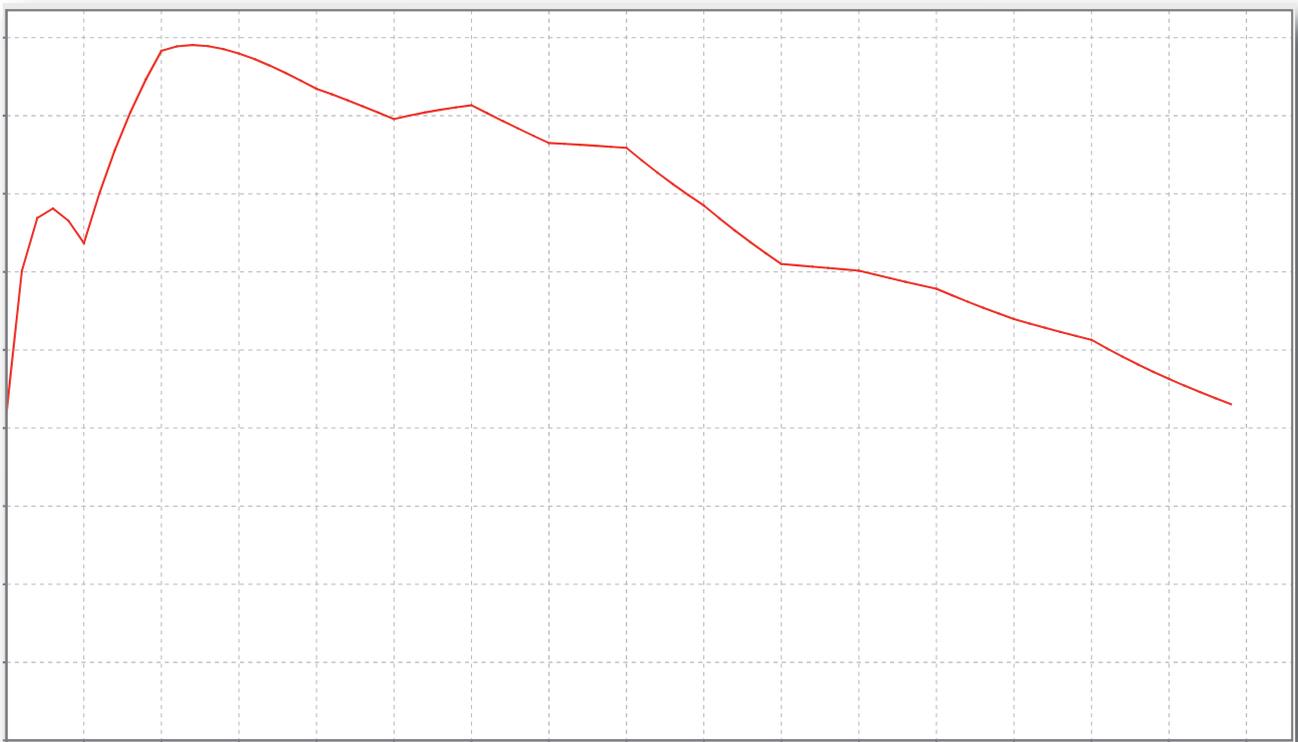
Beautiful wood, both for its colours and for its figurations.

Well workable

It is not an easy wood to find on the market. But for its beauty it is worth looking for.



Well! Yes, I admit it ... I really like woods!



what rod is it?

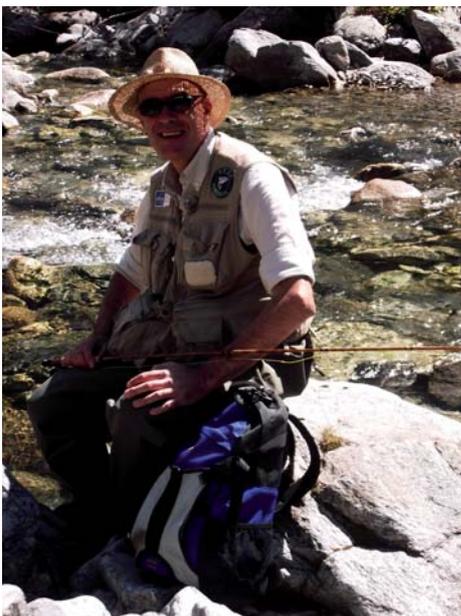
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# Taper... and bar chat

by Giorgio Grondona



Who would have thought that the Covid 19 pandemic would be only the first of a series of negative events that would / have made sport fishing not viable. In a large area of north-western Italy, in addition to the virus that has kept us company since February 2020, there has been that of the swine fever which has hit the wild boar population, putting pig farms at risk. The affected Regions have banned the use of woods, plains and waterways for recreational purposes ... which no longer exist, that's right, viruses and counter-viruses were not enough to reduce the spaces that can be used as we have not seen for a long time ... a long time. The Po, the Great River that crosses the Po Valley, survives thanks to the contribution of the left tributaries that descend from the Alps, on the contrary, the right tributaries, the Apennine ones have no more water for months and their dry shores are scorched by the sun.



Not all evils come to harm, with this phrase mature people try to comfort the youth who are struggling with some misfortune that mortifies their enthusiasm, I am not a person (I am the donkey !!!) and I am not even young but that sentence there: "Not all evils come to harm" I try to please myself and the hours I wanted to spend on the waterways by dedicating them to rodmaking, there will be time to read or reread some books, watch or relate to some videos , try and try again some rods ... conceived and rethought long ago.

Thought and rethought long ago, surely when our, ooopppsss your ancestors (sorry, I often forget that I am the donkey) began to eat fish they did not start to catch them with fishing line and hooks but, when they realized that by stimulating their appetite they could catch them "for hunger" they strove to do so, "threads" and hooks with which to get food within reach of the fish's mouth constituted the starting point for the development of everything that today is the equipment / kit of which "modern" fishermen are proud.

At the beginning, probably, hook and thread were enough to capture prey with which to feed, but just as likely your ancestors understood that in particular moments or in places not favourable to a cautious approach, to make their deceptions reach where they would have liked it was not possible. neither trying to project them with only one's hands nor exploiting the drift offered by the sometimes absent and sometimes impetuous current.

Seeing the fish and not being able to catch them because they are "out of range" is frustrating for every fisherman, for a fisherman supported only by a hungry need to bring something on the table for himself and his family will certainly have been a source of great discomfort, discomfort that vanished, at least in part, when someone thought of connecting a line armed with a hook to a long pole ... stick ... rod?!!!

There can be many methods and tools for catching fish: nets, harpoons pots and, as we know, rods ... these we could call them legal, there are also others but ... let's move on that already the speech can become ... explosive!!!

Let's also leave out nets, traps and harpoons and let's dedicate ourselves to what for Bamboo rodmakers is a source of hours and hours spent in their shop intent and focused on "creating" something that is efficient and at the same time well executed, finished and "beautiful": the rod (clearly from fishing we do not misunderstand) but ... are we really sure it's a rod?!

If you look up the definition of cane in the dictionary or on the web, it follows that with this term, we mean a "something" that has a structure that alternates hollow sections with others full.



According to this definition, if we do not build hollow rods, we must talk about fishing sticks, however, whether we call them rods or sticks, in the end, it changes little at least if we do not consider the difference in weight between "solid" and hollow-built as fundamental.

Surely the first who had the idea of tying a line to a ... "more or less long support" used what nature made available to them, so we can think of stems or branches of shrubs rather than marsh reeds that surely grew spontaneously on the banks of streams and bodies of water. The aim was to stay at a distance from prey and avoid diving into possibly icy waters.

After the initial euphoria for having solved the distance between fish and fisherman, a second problem, with multiple aspects, presented itself (don't you always say that in life you never stop learning?) to the hungry riparians. Since there were no shops, neither physical nor online, where to buy extra-strong nylon, fluorocarbon and chemically sharpened steel hooks? They had to learn, I think quickly, that to safeguard their lines made from (delicate) vegetable fibres, animal tendons (fragile), bone hooks that, however well-made and sharp were intended to follow, in case of breakage / tear, the line to which they were tied, they should have selected the "woods" favouring the more elastic and flexible ones that allowed to indulge the escapes of the hooked fish so that the aforementioned weak part of the system would not yield and be lost together with the precious prey.

It goes without saying that Homo Sapiens is attributed, among the qualities that differentiate it from other living beings, the ability to exploit one's spirit of observation to understand how to bring elements and situations to one's advantage, so it is logical to assume that the "pioneers" fishing with stick / rod did not take long to understand that the flexibility that safeguarded the delicate part of the equipment could be exploited to "project" the line bearing the bait: Yay the study of ACTION is born (who knows if things really went like this, at least chronologically, but ... I like the idea).

In any case, whatever the historical moment in which the interest in the more or less "harmonic" flexing of the first sketches of what, over time, became the "rods" (fishing rods) made a dent in the mind of Homo Sapiens, however, marked the beginning of an evolution that is still far from reaching completion or, if you prefer, at least reaching a result (fishing rod) that is excellent for everyone and in every situation ... of fishing.

Fishing, understood as a practice to catch fish and other animals that live in fresh or salt water, is divided into professional and amateur / sport. Artificial fly fishing ... flyfishing (I know! You like it more !!!) is part of the amateur / sport and among those who practice it nowadays there are some subjects who, after having fished, built imitations for fishing, modified / assembled rods made of synthetic materials eventually land up at Bamboo and undergo its fascination until they get to build the rods that they will then use. To do so, animated by justified enthusiasm, they get information, study, attend courses, get equipped and once the "production" starts, they perceive a joyful state of mind that increases self-esteem to the point that, with undisguised pride and after having "tested" the result of their commitment on their own, they extend the test to friendly fishermen, members of their Club and, on occasion, unknown fishermen they meet on the river.

Proposing to others to try their self-built rods is a practice that every rodmaker should implement as much as possible!!! Do not jump, this poor donkey does not expect to be heard, but ... if you go to read (or reread) the article entitled "Some concepts on Bamboo rodmaking" written by Tom Morgan which you can find in the Bamboo Journal n° 4 you will have the pleasure of finding the same exhortation.

Tom's article, in my view, is very useful to understand that building a fishing rod to fish with a fly is not just a supreme DIY exercise. The final result can be aesthetically excellent both for execution and for the value of the components used, and it may even seem excellent if you cast "dry", but it can turn out to be a near-disappointment at the end of a fishing trip.



OK!!! What do we mean by a trip / fishing trip? For some, that cluster of crepuscular minutes known as "Coup du Soir" (the evening hatch) is enough. Others, on the other hand, feel satisfied with those few casts made in the uncertain light of dawn and as soon as the light becomes brighter, they leave the "field" to face the daily chores calmly. Then there are those who leave only to fish from sunrise to total darkness and to finish the last category which includes those who "If you are not away at least four days to fish, at least 8/10 hours a day why go"!!!!

It is not easy to find a way to please everyone and, at the same time, to be able to evaluate everyone's considerations, everyone is different from the others for physical characteristics and character and the rods are not all the same, they all serve to fish, in our case with the fly, but they are different in length and in action precisely because from the beginning something to improve or to change immediately jumps to the eye.

Clearly the reasons for the "research" are no longer (or should not be) aimed at the bin, but more simply aimed at a playful / recreational use. In other words, if we enjoy fishing with a nice rod made of natural material, at least for some, it increases the fun.

The pleasure of fishing with a bamboo rod, obviously for enthusiasts, is already something finely satisfying, the joy of having something in your hands that required hours of meticulous work increases the pleasure of fishing, if the patient work has produced a "unique" reed, the joy can turn into pride for those who use it but above all for those who built it!!!

When can a rod be defined as "unique"? Probably someone will just need to read their name written on the face of the rod, others will be proud to have indicated to the rodmaker the colour of the silk for the wrappings, the choice of the stripping guide if in stone or metal, the reel seat of wood more or less rare, okay but ... the taper? Are they all okay? I don't think so, but what the donkey believes doesn't matter!!!

If you have time and if you have not already done so, I recommend that you look for the Pezon et Michel catalogue which for more than half of the last century produced bamboo rods. In that vast catalogue, in addition to the rods produced in series, you will find about thirty of them, in lengths between 6'0" and 9'0" for lines from 2 to 6, inspired by as many famous fishermen of the period who, for various reasons, entered in contact with the French company.

Pezon et Michel is certainly not the only case of production that makes use of external "consultancy", even famous "Artisans" had in their catalogue rods born from indications from customers who are particularly capable of suggesting modifications. On the B.J. n° 1 you will find an article by Aberto Azzoni entitled "Rodmaker without site": it deals with the encounters that Azzoni had with Walter Brunner ... even the reading of this "story" offers food for thought.

Who knows how many truly "unique" rods, I'm talking (speaking) of the Taper not of cosmetics, have been made and who knows how many more will be made, luckily. Oh yes luck, how lucky it is to have dear fishing friends who do not stand aside when it comes to trying a rod, fishing friends who try the rods while fishing!!!

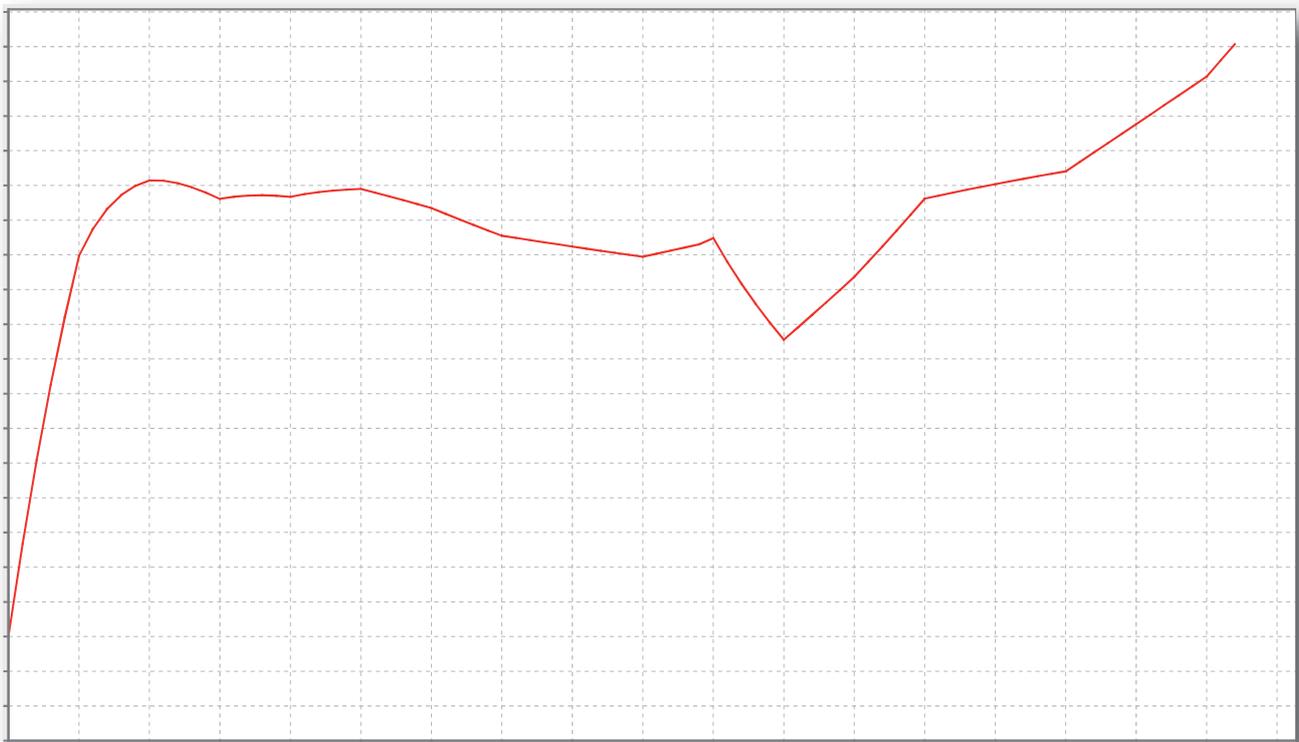


It is true, you are right, you can also try a rod on the grass of a lawn, on the floor of a gym, in the parking lot of a restaurant, but if it is a fishing rod it should be tried by fishing, for hours, for days, maybe alternating different lines and catching fish to be brought to a landing net, a few dry casts may be indicative but they are not enough to rule that a taper is valid or not or, if you prefer, it is always good for anyone.

If it is practically impossible to frame the historical moment in which the advantages and disadvantages of flexing a rod (used for fishing) began to be evaluated, it is equally impossible to predict the achievement of the "Perfect Taper" to be reproduced in all lengths and powers for rods at one and two hands, therefore ... I leave to others the pleasure of continuing the research and developing "projects" using programs designed for this purpose. To numbers and diagrams I prefer ... bar chat with those dear friends I was telling you about earlier.

I'd like to go back to the taper topic, maybe already on the next B.J. so I would try to explain what I mean by "bar chat". I stop here with the awareness of having taken advantage, as often happens, of your patience and reminding you that it is not necessary to share what I have written because, as always:

*"A donkey's braying  
does not go up to Heaven"!!!!!!*



what rod is it? \_\_\_\_\_

# IBRA GATHERING 2022

by Maurizio Cardamone



ITALIAN BAMBOO  
RODMAKERS GATHERING

BOARIO TERME (BS)  
ITALY  
27-28-29 MAGGIO 2022  
[WWW.RODMAKERS.IT](http://WWW.RODMAKERS.IT)

Rizzi Aquacharme  
hotel & spa

With some trepidation of the organizers (you can understand, after 2 missed editions due to the pandemic) and much awaited by a large number of participants, the 16th edition of the annual gathering of the association took place at the Terme di Boario from Friday 27 to Sunday 29 May this year.

I will spend only a few words to describe what happened in those three days, then I will leave room for the photographs that, much more than many words, can give the idea of the usual beautiful atmosphere of our gathering.

As per tradition, the meeting was divided into three days: Friday, dedicated to the fishing day "bamboo only" which saw a large number of members and supporters, equipped with bamboo rods kindly provided by the members, "spread" along various stretches of the Oglio river. The river had in fact recovered from a small flood and the conditions were certainly not optimal for fly fishing (I suspect that the catches do not require more than the fingers of one hand to be counted), but the great barbecue lunch at the lake La Sosta in Esine (we are much indebted to the Bertolotti brothers!!!) has largely compensated for the little fishing disappointment.

In the afternoon, for those who did not choose some rest and chat to recover from the lavish lunch and beer, there was the nice alternative of a fishing session in the Dezzo river, a splendid tributary of the Oglio, which in addition to many beautiful catches offered temperatures more bearable for those who dared! Yes, because this year at the end of May we were in full summer heat throughout Italy and Boario was no exception.

Aperitif and dinner at the hotel, and then lots of chats with friends that we hadn't seen for a long time ended the long day.

The day after, Saturday, saw the start of the formal gathering, which this year enjoyed the splendid setting of the Liberty pavilion within the garden of the spa complex.

After the introductory report from Alberto Poratelli, with much emotion of all for the memory of Gabriele Gori, who died prematurely not long time before, there was the traditional exhibition of the rods from members and not only, as well as 10 parallel workshops in which many members (to whom a heartfelt thanks is due) practically demonstrated various stages of bamboo processing. In the afternoon there were presentations of two invited guests: Edward Barder and Marco Cecchi and one from Marzio Giglio, not a guest but a long-time member, and certainly not less famous! (You may find the details of both the workshops and the presentations in the meeting program).



Then the double general assembly took place: it was in fact necessary to approve a new statute, which became necessary to allow IBRA to be registered in the register of the so-called third sector. In addition to this, the assembly unanimously voted the proposal to change the name of our association to "Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association Gabriele Gori APS".

After the approval of the new statute, the assembly appointed the new Board of Directors, which replaces the outgoing one.

The elected are:

- Alberto Poratelli - President
- Moreno Borriero - Vice President
- Silvano Sanna – Board member
- Mauro Moretti - Board member
- Massimo Paccotti – Secretary

The new Conciliation Body was also elected, consisting of three effective members and an alternate member. These are: Francesca Morisetti, Angelo Arnoldi, Davide Fiorani and Alberto Azzoni.

We wish the new board a good job in continuing the work of the late Gabriele Gori for the next four years.

The day ended with the association's grand gala dinner.

The next day, Sunday, with decidedly worse weather since the previous evening, we returned to the SPA park where those who wanted could try to cast with many of the rods on display, while the traditional raffle of the many prizes was also held in parallel (always a very funny moment), including 3 bamboo rods, the traditional "rod of the gathering" which this year was a beautiful 7 feet 6 inches, 4 weight, by Silvano Sanna and Alberto Poratelli. Two other rods were also kindly offered by Bernard Rigal and Reinhard Lang as well as a number of other prizes donated by members and sponsors for a total of over 40 prizes. Thanks to all on behalf of the lucky winners, but also of those who will receive the charity to which the proceeds of the raffle will be destined.

For statistics lovers I officially inform that not even this year I have managed to win a rod (while I know that someone has won more than one over the years) and I am more and more convinced that the only way for me would be to get all the tickets ). The prizes up for grabs, however, were so many and some beautiful objects consoled me too, as well as many other winners.

This is the sad moment in which the participants begin to leave. Many still have to face a long journey, sometimes a very long one, and in any case the gathering officially ended after lunch.

We have to take due note that the registered participants in this 16th gathering were a total of 75, of which 8 came from France, 2 from Switzerland and Germany and 1 from Hungary and the UK.

Let's meet again soon.... 2023 already awaits us!



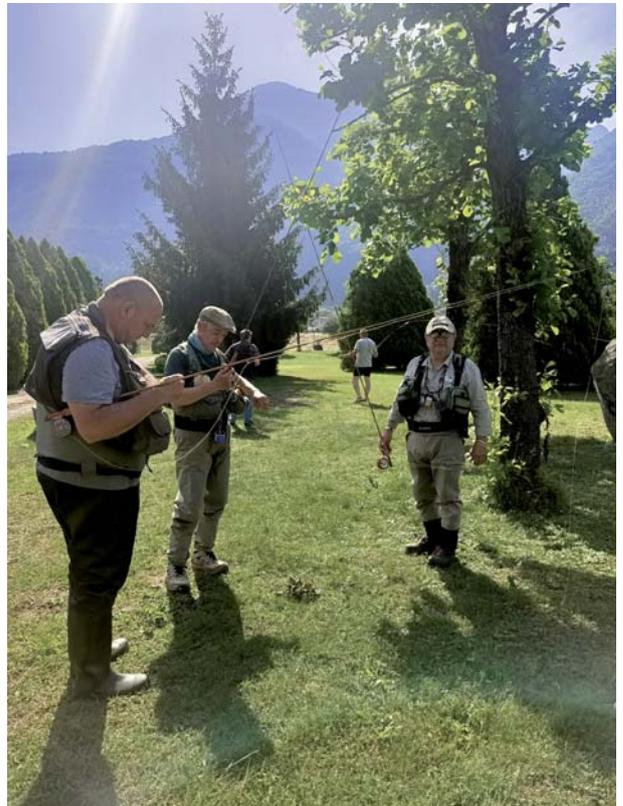
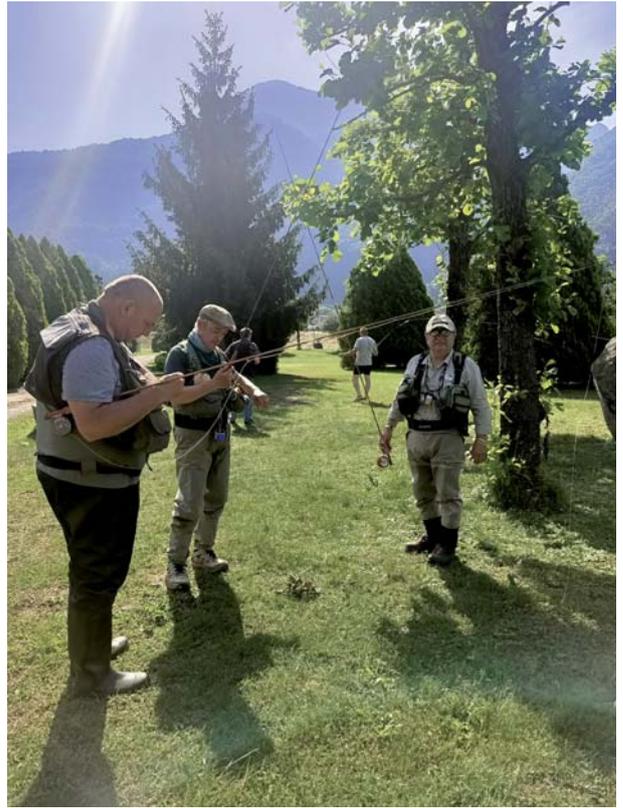






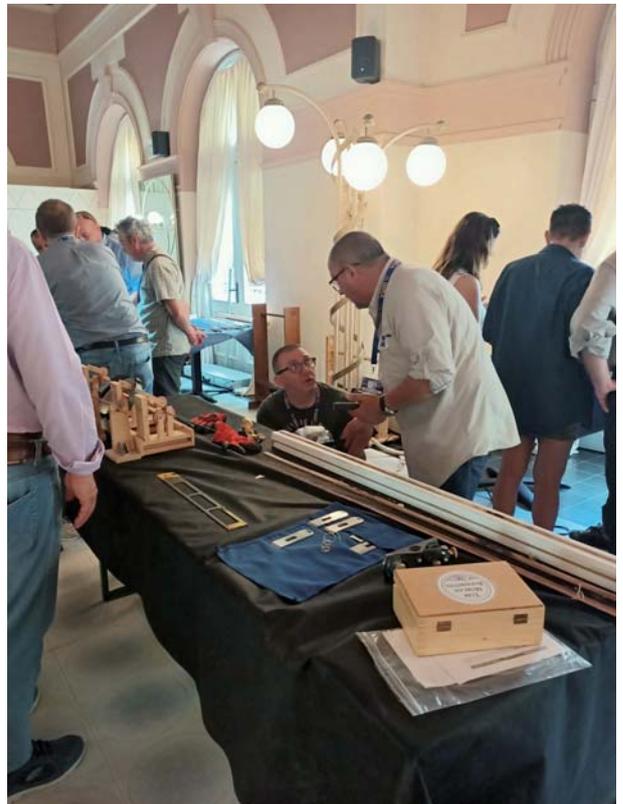


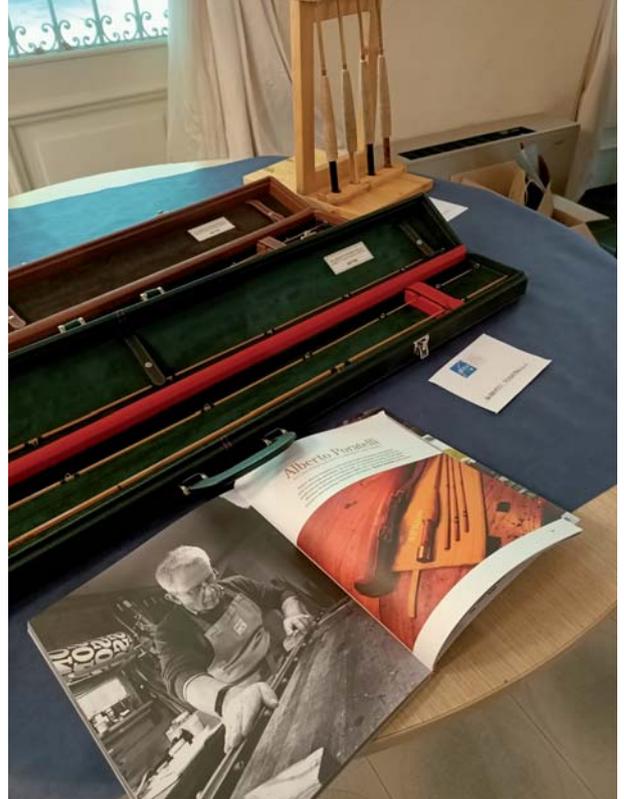


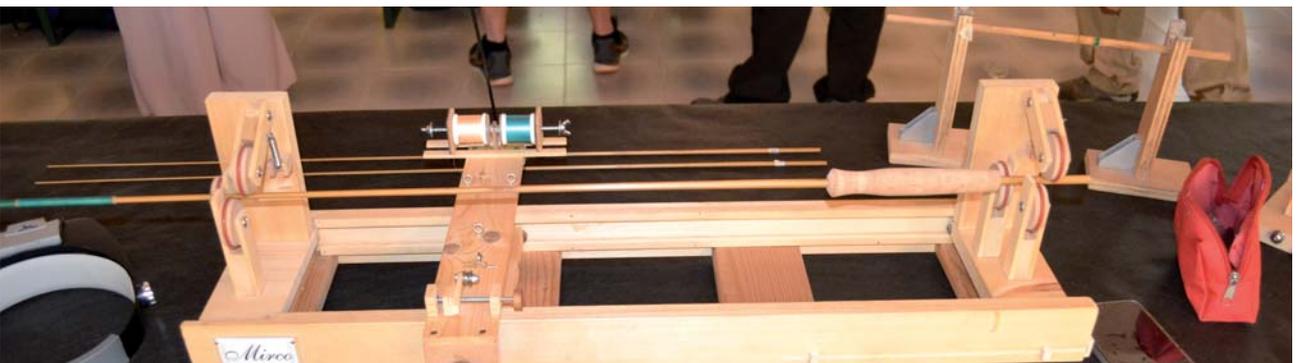








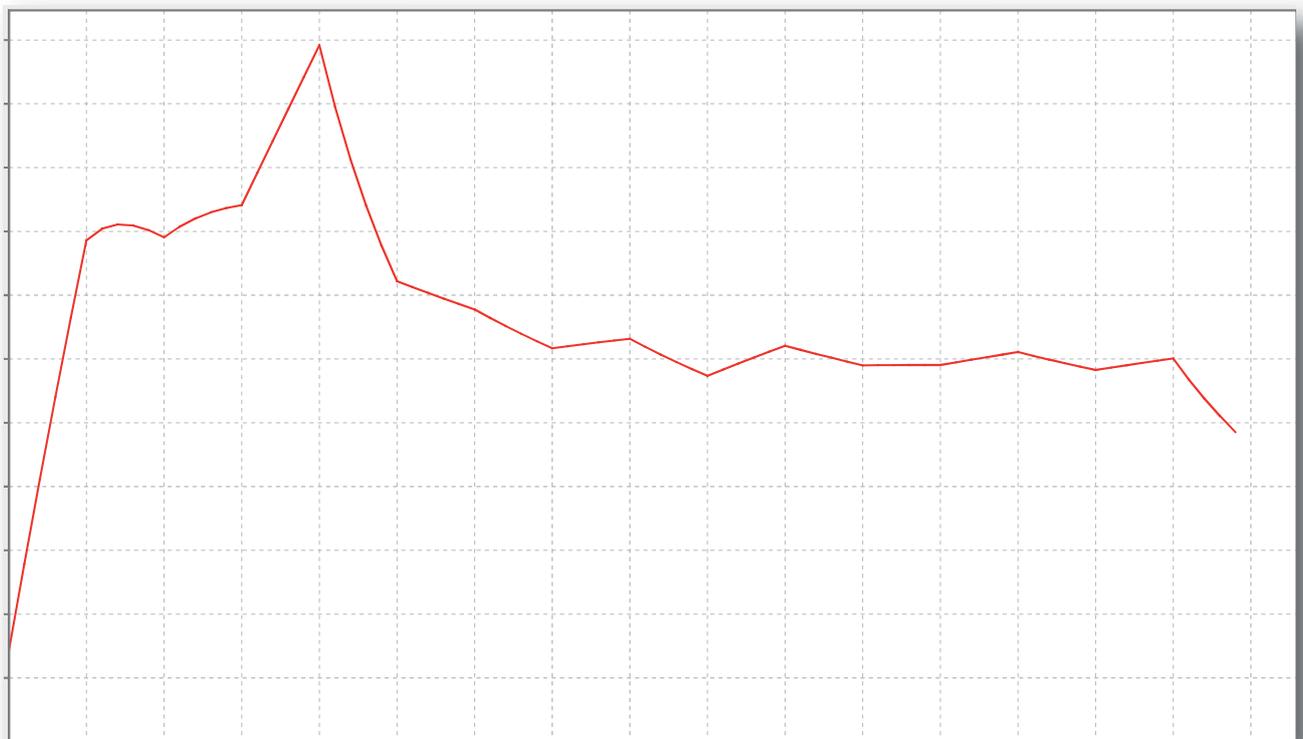








ci vediamo nel 2023!



what rod is it?

\_\_\_\_\_

## A credo

The work draws from and builds on that of others who came before, as well as those working today. Be proud of and respect the tradition, and acknowledge the people and work that inspire you.

Explore the methods of others, to know and release ways of expanding the craft. Take pleasure in the achievements of all makers, whether newcomers or established rod makers.

Understand that advancements in the craft are often in the form of small, private, and not easily discernible approaches and ways of work.

Make rods the way you like them, as opposed to what the market or "experts" suggest.

Recognise the craft as of equal status to all other work, and approach all facets of work with the same commitment and care, whether functional or aesthetic, hidden or exposed.

Find comfort in and be honest about your own ways of work, whether by hand or machine tools. Each has its place, and is a matter of choice.

Make every rod as if for yourself and destined for a last cast. Know that the best bamboo rod has not yet been made, and may not come at the highest price nor from an established centre of the craft.

Explore local and everyday materials, and guard against waste or environmental harm.

Assist new entrants to the craft, enabling them to find their own ways.

Make time to use your own work on the water.

*Stephen Boshoff, Moreno Borriero, Alberto Poratelli*

*Solution of the quiz of the insertion pages:*

page 5 -	W. Cattanach 7042
page 12 -	Dickerson Lyle
page 17 -	Garrison 202 E
page 24 -	Hardy Palakona CC de France
page 28 -	Heddon Folsom 7042
page 43 -	IBRA IRP 7232
page 46 -	H. Leonard Catskill
page 74 -	Payne 101
page 79 -	P&M superparabolic PPP
page 96 -	P. Young - Martha Marie

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Newsletter  
of Italian Bamboo Rodmakers Association

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