



How to turn & assemble a pen

The demo this evening was given by the acknowledged master of pen making, Ken Croft – in fact, Ken admitted that when in business, he imported more pen kits from China than Axminster!

Pens can be turned from wood, acrylic or polyester (but you can't really turn polyester, only scrape it).

Ken started by showing us a few of the gadgets necessary for pen making (many of them home made): a pen blank bandsaw jig; a pen mill; mandrels and many more (see later in this article). He also showed us the packaged pen kit.



You should start with two pen blanks (cut using the bandsaw jig) and drill the centres



on a drill press to take the ferrules. Use a 7mm drill for slimline pens. Fit the ferrules before turning (you can use a dab of superglue when fitting them to make sure they stay).

He assembled the two pre-prepared blanks on a mandrel in the lathe and started to take the corners off them, using a skew.

You can either use a small spindle gouge or a skew for this, but Ken prefers the skew, using a planning cut, about 1/3 of the way along the edge. Use a fast speed to do this. Turn the blanks to round, but don't go too far as it will end up too thin and crack.



Before going on to shape the pen, Ken apologised if his speech was a bit slurred, but he had just broken a tooth off at the gum on a 30 year old bridge, and he has been seeing a specialist. He then explained that the collets he was using give you the thickness that you need to work down to, and that he uses a planet adapter in place of a knurled ring.

Once the pen had been shaped, Ken then sanded starting with 180 grit progressively down to 1000 grit. The finer the grit you can finish on the better (even down to 2000) which will help to guard against wear from fingers. Keep the speed low when sanding to prevent flying dust – you can also put a bit of polish on the grit.

To polish, use T-Cut or Brasso for acrylic or polyester, but for wood, the best protection is superglue, put on with a bit of polish – about 3 layers should give good protection against finger acid. You can also buff it up with a bit of Brasso. **However, don't put too much superglue on**, otherwise it will stick the whole lot together on the lathe, and you would have difficulty getting it off (as Ken discovered, see photo).



Trying to remove it from the lathe

To mount the final pen together, Ken has developed his own clamp, made from a silicon applicator trigger.



First put the nib in, then the mechanism (brass end in), insert the refill, then mount the clip to the top and put the two halves together with the band in the middle.





These pens can sell for between £7.50 and £10

A packaged pen kit (about £3 for 2)



Lathes for sale

Dave Simms has 2 lathes for sale, for details please contact him.

Forthcoming Attractions 2018/2019

Meetings normally are on the first Thursday in the month except when there are elections. Meetings start at **7pm**.

6th December Christmas Novelties
Sat 12th January Woody's Christmas Party
7th February
7th March

Remember: members who demonstrate will receive payment.

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