

DOUG BELL PYROGRAPHY WORKSHOPS

Doug was lured across the Nullabor to the biennial Collaboration workshop in Bunbury in October last year. Rob Jones, president of Collaboration, kindly made arrangements for Doug to deliver a number of workshops for other groups.

WAWA was fortunate to engage Doug for workshops at Bunbury and Melville. Like many crafts and art activities, a keen person can teach themselves pyrography (or hot poker work if you prefer) from books and videos ... but you learn a lot more a darn sight more quickly from tuition with someone as skilled as Doug.

For one thing, you start with the basics – tools, materials, safety, sources of supply, advice on getting started. We had been issued a list of items and materials to bring with us, which included turned bowls with wide rims for maximum decoration space and two upright pieces, one with straight sides and one with convex sides, all-in light-coloured wood. Before we even thought about putting a mark on any of these, Doug took us through a series of practice exercises so we could learn how to adjust the burning ability of our equipment.

We were shown how different tips need different techniques of application. We were shown how to make our own tips from nichrome wire. We discussed the importance of visualising what you want to achieve then applying design techniques appropriate to the piece of wood (or other material) that you have to work on. Obviously, we were working with wood, but pyrography can be applied to other materials such as leather. The ability to draw is an advantage but not essential as Doug pointed out the possibilities of using carbon or graphite paper to trace a pattern or shape or even a full scene onto a surface.

After a morning of concentrating on instruction and practising on pieces of plywood, we started working on our turned pieces. A feature of the practice sessions and the work on the bowls was silence. Everyone was so absorbed in what they were doing, you'd have thought we were sitting an exam.

Doug walked about checking how each person was going about their decorating and offering advice or showing how something could be done. It was interesting to come up for breath and have a look at the different ways everyone there had applied what they had learned. Doug had brought along a large number of examples of items he had produced using different techniques. These ranged from burned only to coloured and burned, from small ornaments to quite large works of art. These were not only educational but inspiring too.

Among the handouts was a pattern for making your own Golden Section Gauge. You can download it and a template for a Golden Section Ruler from [https:// www.quantumbalancing.com/goldenmeantemplate.htm](https://www.quantumbalancing.com/goldenmeantemplate.htm) There were a lot of happy faces by the end of the workshop and much discussion about what each of us was taking away from the day. I'm fairly sure everyone who attended would advocate getting instruction to both speed up the learning process and to gain confidence.

Many thanks to Doug for an absorbing day of instruction and to the host groups for organising the workshops.