



*Rodmakers Gatherings still don't have a very long tradition in Europe. In the year 2006 a Swiss group of rodmakers („gesplisste.ch“) started with the first „International Rodmakers Gathering“ in Sarnen, Switzerland to promote exchange of experience among the European community of rodmakers. Since this starting event, rodmakers from all over Europe meet every year somewhere in Switzerland, Italy or in Germany.*

After some national meetings, it was for the third time that the official „European Rodmakers Gathering“ was held. Differently than in the past years, the event was not organized in rather „central “Europe, but in the northern part of Germany, in Witten. The intention was clear: Rodmakers from northern parts of Europe (Holland, Belgium and Scandinavia) should be encouraged to attend the meeting.

And actually a very different public was to be found: many new faces from Germany, Holland and Denmark. Unfortunately we still missed rodmakers from England at our meetings and even the otherwise so active Italians and their French friends unfortunately did not find the way to Witten this time.

However, more than sixty rodmakers joined the meeting in the park of the Hotel Hohenfels in Witten - a real success.

Calmly, surrounded by the forests, large lawns for rod tests and pleasant conference rooms helped that the meeting took place in an atmosphere maintained by friendship, in which also the culinary part was important.



*Hotel Hohenfels in Witten GER*

But let's speak of the meeting:

Rodmakers gatherings are in the meantime not „only“ exchange of experience between builders. Also edge topics of the fishery receive here its platform. Therefore interesting craftsmanship and artist were to be found:

Angela Lenz, the designer of the official poster showed her works of art such as paintings, painted fly boxes and also a new calendar for the coming year.

Leather works continue to find interest among rodmakers. Rod tubes, reel boxes and many other interesting products were to be seen on Detlef Mueller's table.

Scrimshaw - for most people just a word! Whoever was in Witten, they now know, what they are speaking about:

Rene Funk, two days long sitting with highest precision at the work, described his method to refine in reelseats, spacers, rod fittings or other parts with motives from the fishery.



*One of Rene's Masterpiece on a Knife's Handle*

He is not a rodmaker, but a real reelmaker! Actually there is no need at all to introduce him: Ari't Hard. The items, not only reels, that this Dutch artist brought out in the last years, are indescribable – you just have to see them and then nothing other than admiration remains. These are exactly the people, which keep the scene alive!



*Ari't Hard – no comment – you have to see it!*

Only few people actually know, what a huge amount of literature on fly fishing and rodbuilding exists and the number of registered patents to materials, models or methods is enormous. And we have actually a rod builder in our group, a real master in this matter: Christian Meinke!

For years, he has been dealing with this subject, searching every book available, and he explained in a detailed presentation the literature and sources even back to the Egypts (!) and referred to the many existing patents. He showed us clearly, that almost everything we make and think to be the first, usually already exists somewhere. Maybe the tools or the aids have become a little more modern.



*"Literature professor" Christian Meinke*

Of course rodbuilding was the main topic of this weekend. Subjects in practical work for both, beginners as well as experts, could be followed the whole day.

Starting to build rods generally means buying an expensive planing form. But several Rodmakers, who try to build only one or two rods, don't want to spent too much money for all the tools needed. Alex Kechagias described in detail how to make a inexpensive wooden planing form.

Perfect planing can be done with sharp blades. Most of us use Japanese water stones for sharpening the blades to achieve the best results. Johann Tremml from the „Ashly“ company demonstrated the use of „Belgisch Brocken“, a European natural stone, which makes the sharpening procedure much more pleasurable.



*Johann Tremml discussing the advantages of his sharpening stones to Bjarne Fries, DK*

The majority of rodmakers are using a lathe. Of course the variety of materials, such as different metals or wood, need different cutters.



*„Controlled Fireworks“ by Robert Schander*

An introduction for the participants to this not completely simple topic was given by Waldemar Nowak and Robert Schander and extensively discussed afterwards.

Rods are built in very different ways. According to experience, a weak point in the bamboo sections will be the knots. Therefore: why not build knotless? Christian Strixner argued with this topic and showed a simple manufacturing process, which has also different practical advantages (e.g. when heat treating). Part of his lecture was also a detailed presentation of Ludwig Reim's method of rodbuilding. This method has the advantage of a completely equal distribution of power fibers within the entire rod cross section

Ludwig himself was demonstrating and explaining his „15°-Methode“ for determining the precise line weight for any rod.



*Ludwig and „the 15° Methode“*

The ferrules for fly rods and the different materials they are made of, are subject of discussions for years: stiffness, interrupted „power flow“, aesthetics etc. are the topics.

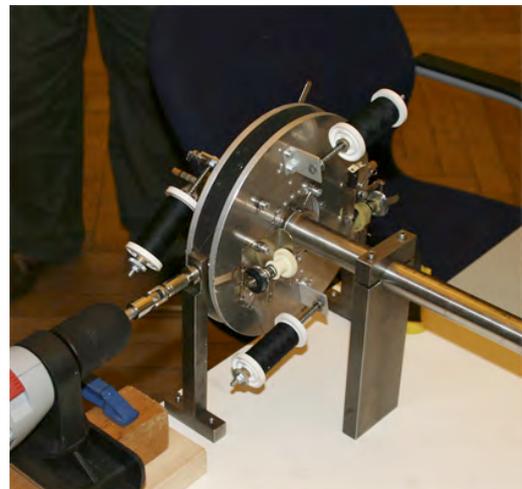


The professional Danish Rodmaker Bjarne Fries, the pleasant philosopher in the rodmakers community and „father“ of the (FIBH) bamboo ferrule, explained the production process and spoke on his long-term experience within the last 15 years that he has built these types of ferrules – Summary: the principle has proven itself without any problems!

After planing, the splices have to be glued. Turnings and not necessarily straight strips are what many rodmakers know as a final result of this procedure. One of the reasons for this may be found in the binding process. Ottavio Bisaz, a Swiss rodmaker and engineer took care of this topic as he pointed out pro and cons of the individual binding procedures and demonstrated finally his own construction of a 4-string-binder.



Ottavios „Swiss made“- precision manufactured construction will make excessive demands of the abilities of the average rodbuilder.



Rodmakers gatherings do not only serve to keep alive the discussions over possible manufacturing processes. All the experiences can finally be found in the finished products and therefore casting and testing rods is an important goal. In Witten this was possible in the best way: calm environment and enough place - and perfect sunny weather!



The topic of 2-handed rods and Spey Casting was given a lot of time – a real challenge even for Vhristian Strixner and Robert Stroh



*Andy Royer („the Bamboo broker ",USA) honored the European rodbuilders with his visit. In the near future he will operate a shop in Europe to be able to supply the European rodmakers continuously with bamboo poles.*

*„... can I feel it? Did he use my bamboo?"*

It remains to say „Thank you“: Gerd Peter Wieditz and his friends in the background did manage to set up a rodmakers meeting with an attractive program at an outstanding place. And we are already looking forward to the next, the 4th European Gathering, which will take place on 7 and 8 May in Sansepolcro (Italy).



Philipp Sicher, Switzerland

Pictures: Jürg Schuft, Jaroslav Vecko und Philipp Sicher

