



Scott Horsburgh Designer and Maker of Fine Handcrafted Furniture

Article 10: 11th September 2009

Piece: Sideboard

Subject: Machining the drawer runners.

The four drawers are all running on veneered surfaces. The veneers are commercial veneers at 0.6mm thick and by the time they are ready to be finished they may well be half of that thickness. If you run drawers on fragile veneered surfaces there is a danger that the continued use of the drawer may wear through the veneer.

Have you ever seen old pine furniture where the drawer runners are made from pine. You will see tracks worn into the runners from continued use. To avoid this situation I am inlaying 4mm thick strips of Cooktown Ironwood (*Erythropheum Chlorostachys*). Cooktown Ironwood is one of the most dense timbers in the world. It is more dense than African Blackwood. It is so dense that it sinks in water. It comes from far north Queensland in Australia. These strips will not wear so the drawers will continue to run smoothly.

I have allowed for the width of the drawer side as well as the drawer slip. These strips will be inlaid about 0.5mm proud of the veneered surface and then hand planed down to just above the surface. A final sanding will leave them flush with the veneered panel.

I cut 4.5mm strips using my bandsaw. I wanted them all to be the same thickness so inlaying would be easier and consistent. If I tried to thickness a 4.5mm thick piece of wood in my thicknesser I would be lucky to see it come out the other end looking half reasonable. It would more likely appear looking like it had been chomped on by a dinosaur. The pressure and shock from the initial rollers would make a real mess.

So I prepared a simple jig to ensure I could thickness these pieces safely. See photo below:



I have used double sided tape to stick all of the strips to a piece of 8mm mdf. At each end I have also stuck some thicker pieces of Jarrah. I have ensured that the grain direction on all pieces runs in the same direction. When I run this through the thicknesser the first piece of jarrah will take the initial shock of the rollers before the blades pass onto the Ironwood.

I will take this down gradually until the jarrah is a fraction higher than the Ironwood. Small cuts help to maintain control. If you try and take too much off with a cut you will have problems.

The photo below shows the jig after the final cut. All pieces are the same thickness and I now have strips of 4mm Ironwood which are consistent. Despite me taking about .25mm cuts when I hit the Ironwood I still had one piece that behaved badly. The grain began to interlock and I lost a section.







Scotty Horsburgh
Yallingup Steading