

TACKLE BAG

MAGNUS ANGUS puts the latest fly-fishing



Stiffness and Action Angle

These offer a simple way to measure a couple of characteristics of single-handed rods. To measure a rod I fix the butt so it is horizontal and the rings face up, weights are then attached to the tip until the rod is bent downwards by one third of the rod's length.

While the rod is deflected I measure the angle of at the rod tip: fast action is 70°+, medium fast from 65°-70°, medium action is 60°-65° and so on. The **Action Angle** of most modern rods is between 65° and 74°.

The weight used to deflect the rod is then weighed to give a figure for the rod's **Stiffness**. We describe rods as more or less 'powerful,' which is simply their stiffness or their resistance to bending.

These measurements can be useful when I want to compare rods, for example take two rods with the same line rating and similar action and compare the stiffness – the stiffer rod is more powerful, may not load as easily with a short line, should carry a long line when false casting – the weaker rod should load more easily at short range, but may not false cast as long a line.

Charles Clemes 8ft 6in #5 4pce

If the Clemes reel looked traditional (see last issue) with modern touches, this is the reverse. It looks like a modern, carbon fibre rod, with hints of tradition.

Slim, dark blank with claret whipping holding recoil snakes, high quality finish to the vanish work. Minor filling on the half-wells grip, this looks like floor grade cork. A rather nice reel-seat, Clemes has had the metal parts machined from solid nickel silver and fitted a spacer made from the 500-year-old Turkish walnut used for Anderson Wheeler gun stocks.

The blank is made in the UK and the rod is built in the UK. Clemes says English but they won't tell me who makes the blank so I'll say UK made.

Align the dots, run a #5 line through the rings and



Nickel silver and 500-year-old walnut combine on the reel seat.

cast. Sweet rod, this loads nicely with a modest line and lands a fly accurately and delicately. Give it a bit more gas, open the shoulders a little and it can fire out a lovely line. Despite having a pretty heavy reel-seat this feels light in the hand. I guess that's due partly to length but the blank seems to be to be light and responsive. Definitely not a poker, Clemes describes the action as three-quarters – I honestly have no idea what that means. I'd say this is has a medium action

I can see clearly now... Hook-Point Magnifier

The Hook-Point Magnifier was designed and is sold as an angler's pocket magnifier. I regularly use a couple of small loupes, one designed for checking print, the other for photographs. Both are useful for scrutinising if you want to see the details on flies or check the points or eyes of hooks. The thing is, flies are not flat surfaces, insects are not flat surfaces, so while those magnifiers are OK they are far from ideal; probably best used at a table or tying bench.

So, an anglers magnifier? Let's have a decent lens, and below the lens put a hook clamp with some means of turning the fly. For bugs, I'd like a shallow dish where I can have a nymph wriggling around in a drop of water, it would be great if I could move the dish or fly up and down and so I can move focus. In a nutshell that's what I get from a Hook-Point and more.

The Hook-Point is built around a crisp x6 lens – excellent image quality. Below the lens, a focussing stage is fitted with a hook-clamp and a shallow dish. The stage has a wee rack and pinion arrangement which lets the arm move so I can bring a hook held in the clamp or the contents of the dish into focus.

So, I have my fly clamped and in focus, as with all magnifiers the next problem is light – which is



Adjustable close-up focus.

solved by fitting a bright LED to the lens housing. The angle of illumination and the hard un-diffused light from the LED enhances the sense of crispness and focus. The only time I've seen flies or bugs like this was through a macro lens or in close-up photographs. The simple clamp positions the fly so it turns roughly with the shank or the point of the hook on the axis of rotation and the depth of focus is adequate for viewing tighter, narrower flies without adjusting focus. For more three-dimension flies, a hackled dry for example, I can adjust focus 'through' the fly but can't see the whole fly in focus at the same time, that's in the nature of viewing close-up through any lens where the depth of field is relative to the distance between the lens and subject.

products to the test

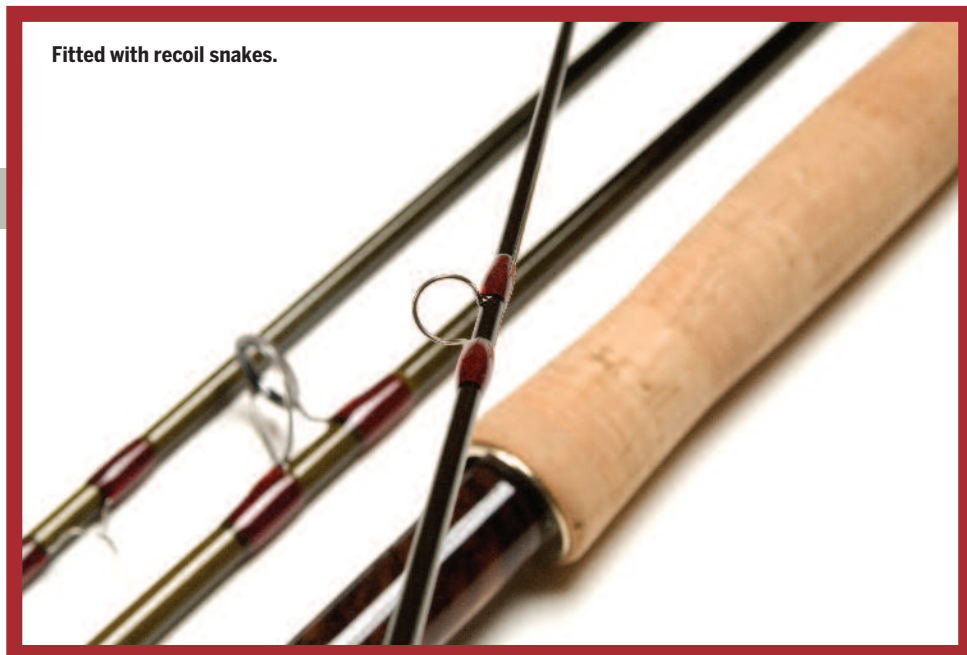
and is stiff enough. (The static deflection figures confirm the action of this is a fraction slower than most rods I handle. That does not mean it's more ponderous, though. Indeed, it's quite the opposite. This is a very smooth-casting rod.)

With a #4 line I seemed to be working harder than the rod, with a #6 loops were slightly wider and the rod loaded a little more deeply at short range which may suit some anglers, I'll stick with the #5.

As with the Clemes reel, this rod is presented beautifully, comes in a canvas rod bag, inside a heavy duty aluminium tube, inside a cloth sleeve. Getting the rod out is a bit like an unveiling, again that sense of occasion, of something special. Each Clemes rod has a serial number and comes with an 'inheritable lifetime warranty' – so maybe they are something special.

I thoroughly enjoyed using this. It is a top-class fishing rod.

Fitted with recoil snakes.



4-piece and an 'inheritable' lifetime guarantee.

Charles Clemes 8ft 6in #5

Sections: 4
 Action Angle: 63°
 Stiffness: 119.8g
 Weight: 107.4g
 Rings: One lined butt ring, Recoil snakes
 Handle: Half-wells
 Fighting butt: No
 Cork quality: High
 Reel Seat: Nickel silver with walnut spacer
 Blank: Gloss brown/olive
 Thread: Claret
 Build quality: Very high
 Rod bag: Canvas
 Rod tube: Heavy duty aluminium
 Price: £650
 From: Charles Clemes. Tel. 020 7499 9315 (www.charlesclemes.co.uk).

The Hook-Point accepts any hook but the angle of view is relatively narrow so much of a large hook or a long fly can't be seen, so this is best with smaller flies. I'd like to be able to slide the clamp to and fro under the lens for flies bigger than about a #10 but I can just drop those bigger flies into the dish and focus on that. Given that the Hook-Point plays on the link between artificial fly and natural insect and this is designed for use at the water the range of sizes this can handle is fine. However the hook clamp is not subtle, tails on smaller flies are pushed out of place. (Has me wondering some sort of adapter could be fitted so I could use the far more delicate and precise jaws of the small circuit-testing

clips I use for displaying flies.)

Other uses and features? I'm looking at the point of my hook in exacting detail, how about a tool that lets me sharpen a dull point? I can see the hook-eye sooo very clearly, how about a pin to clear the eye? Look inside the lens cover and you get answers to both questions – a wee V-shaped tool, a ceramic hook-hone and a needle. For looking at flies while they are still on my leader the designer has fitted a couple of line clips on the dish. The instruction leaflet explains how knots can be tied using the rotary hook clamp – fiddly, but it can be done and I'll bet I've never been so careful about tying a knot.

This is well made from high quality plastics, UK

sourced and assembled.

Everything moves smoothly, and seems sturdy. Good choice of material because this may well get wet or muddy – remove the LED unit and wash in clean water.

Clearly the Hook-Point was designed as a robust tool for at the water-side. However, put this on a fly-tying bench and it takes on another role and, frankly, has the potential to take a fly tyer up a level simply because they have such a clear view of their handiwork; every wrap of thread, every turn of hackle or rib! I've used a Hook-Point when judging competition flies and the view is ruthless.

This is a super little tool which, I hope, will find a home on fly-tying benches and in many anglers waistcoats.



A fly is clamped under the lens.



Ceramic hook-hone and eye-clearing needle.

From: www.hook-point.com
 Price: £55

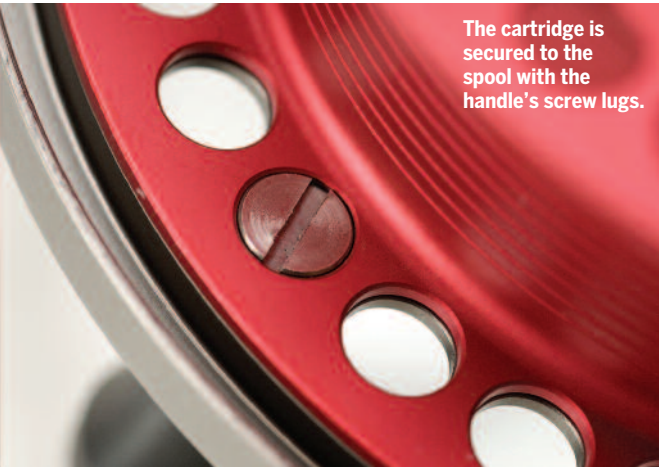
TACKLE BAG

Confident cartridge Daiwa NewEra Cartridge reel 5/6

Clearly a true large arbour reel, this is the 5/6 model so it looks a little bulky for that line-weight, but at 6.5oz it's not that heavy. Hefting this in my hand the size makes the actual weight seem less. Capacity is listed as WF #6 with 100 yards of 20lb backing – more than adequate.

Very nicely finished, all exposed surfaces are smooth and angles are rounded. Both the handle and drag knob are large; no fumbling nonsense, I can get a proper hold of both whether my hands are cold or gloved. Daiwa has decided on a captive nut to link the spool to the body, switching spools may not be quite as swift as a quick-release mechanism but that's a very secure system, it means there is no end-float between the reel and body and fewer small parts to get clogged or damaged. Cartridges are colour-anodised aluminium, light and pretty rigid. Nice touch of simplifying design used to secure the cartridge to the spool, the designer has noticed the handle and counterweight are held in place with screws and has used the screw-heads as lugs.

Half cage design, the body seems rigid enough. I failed to get leader or line stuck between spool and body – which is good. Fully exposed rim, so I can cup the reel in my hand for extra drag and fine control if and when I need it. Daiwa have set the reel foot quite a way off the centre



The cartridge is secured to the spool with the handle's screw lugs.



Small, carbon drag-housing.

of the body so it balances, i.e. hangs straight down. (Also sits balanced on its foot for display.) Oddly, the foot on this reel seems to be slightly squint.

The drag housing is small, the blurb mentions carbon drag surfaces. The NewEra spins freely and silently on the way in, click and 'shushing' sound of the drag on the way out. Drag range is good and adjustment has a clicker and seems well capable of fine adjustment. Direction of wind is decided by a one-way bearing housed inside the hub of the spool, switching hands means releasing one nut and inverting the clutch bearing – dead easy!

That matt finish and simple pattern of ports on the spool looks functional and spare. A glossier finish or more elaborate pattern might be just as functional but more decorative, clamouring for more attention. Side-stepping that gloss and glamour, the NewEra just sits there confident in its ability to do the job and do it well.

Price: Reel and one cartridge £145. Extra cartridge £29. Reel with three cartridges in a protective case £210.
From: Daiwa stockists.

Cartridge spools are colour anodised aluminium.

Greys XF2 Streamflex 10ft #4 4pce

Greys has four XF2 ranges. This a Streamflex, which means light lines and seems to lean towards rivers. OK, so I could fish a #4 line on a lake, this can easily handle a #5 line and with either weight can cast a long line. I'm not convinced this would be my rod of choice playing a big feisty reservoir rainbow. Find me a quiet day on a natural loch, fishing for small wild brownies ... I'd be tempted!

Longer, single-handed rods are appearing on rivers; a few have already appeared in these pages. There's several reasons, and fishing styles certainly has something to do with it. There is a demand, and there's no point making a rod that doesn't sell.

So, this casts nicely, I'd say it's aimed at short to medium casting and

Barrio tapered leaders

Receiving this pack of tapered leaders prompted me to think about instances where I don't use a taper between leader and fly. Without straining too hard I came up with 'type's of fishing where I use level leaders: short leader on a fast sinking fly line, plunking a team of heavy nymphs around, and ... I got stuck there but I'm sure someone will come up with another.

Tapered monofilament is the most common form of shop-bought tapered leader and pretty much the most convenient. Simply uncoil the butt, attach it to the tip of the fly line, uncoil and straighten the rest of the leader by gently pulling – and you're ready to attach the fly.

All mono tapers have a thick end (butt) and a thin end (tippet). Both matter. According to one authority on fly lines (Bruce

Richards, author of *Modern Fly Lines*) the leader butt can be matched to floating fly line tip by diameter – based on the densities of nylon and fly line the leader butt should be about 60% the diameter of the tip. (Note, that is for floating lines and is intended as handy approximation.) In a nutshell, tapered leaders smooth things out between the fly line and fly.

I prefer to nail-knot the leader to the tip of the line so I tend to avoid leaders with very thick butts. At the thin end, all the mono tapers I've used have a level tippet section; I often extend the tippet by simply tying on a length of thinner weaker tippet. When trying these samples I did exactly what I normally do.

From the packet, Barrio 9ft Tapered Leaders are not too glossy but by no means matt. These are 5x (4lb or 0.15mm tippet and



0.53mm butt.) Putting the butt next to the tips of #4 and #5 fly line the butts look about right. The butt seems quite stiff, not the easiest stuff to make a neat nail-knot. Straightening to get rid of the coils is very easy, this nylon mono has a little stretch so



Skeletal aluminium reel seat over maple.



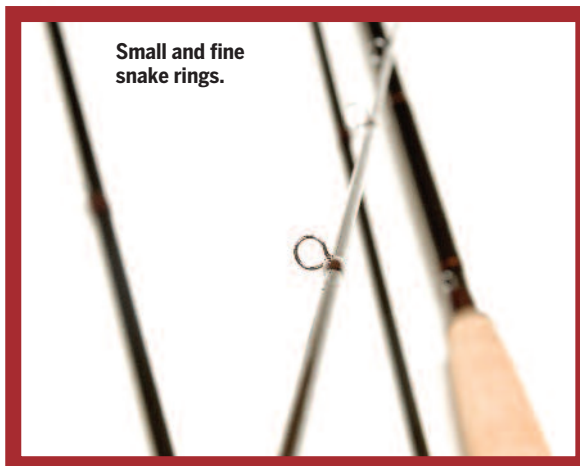
Delicate handle.

it likes to be cast smoothly. Stop very hard and a certain amount of reverb or wobble goes down the line from the tip ring, make a smooth stoke and this just lays the line out.

As I see it the need for longer river rods is coming from modern styles of nymph fishing, particularly fishing with weighted nymphs. Frankly, casting is all but irrelevant if a rod is to be used with a team of heavy bugs or Czech nymphs. Typically that means fishing a leader and maybe a yard of fly line, plunking the flies upstream and controlling the team as they fish downstream. Rods for that type of fishing need to set the hook and play fish, ideally they're at the longer end of the spectrum and they are light. This XF2 checks all those boxes.

Now, let's say I want to fish a team of spiders, I have fly line outside the tip ring again, chances are I'd be casting with one or two rod lengths of fly line – or more. It seems to me that describes this rod. Personally, with a team of flies I'd fit a #5 line so the rod loads more easily and I can comfortably open my loops to reduce the risk of tangles.

So, a modern river rod, presents a fly beautifully, light enough to hold at full arm's reach most of the day. The layout and build reflect those needs. Greys



Small and fine snake rings.

have opted for small, light single-leg rings on the tip section, helping make this nimble and manoeuvrable. The halfwells grip is a conventional shape which gives a sense of delicacy – can be held comfortably thumb or forefinger on top. Both ends of the grip are finished with composite cork, firm durable stuff, the cork inbetween is not great quality. Finished with a robust skeletal reel seat, cut away to reveal a maple burl spacer, fitted with twin locking rings so nothing is falling off there easily. Useful rod!

Greys XF2 Streamflex 10ft #4

Sections: 4
 Action Angle: 70°
 Stiffness: 87.1g
 Weight: 91.6g
 Rings: One lined butt ring, small fine snakes
 Handle: Half-wells
 Fighting butt: No
 Cork quality: mixed
 Reel seat: Silver anodised aluminium with maple spacer
 Blank: Gloss olive
 Thread: Olive
 Build quality: High
 Rod tube: Cordura covered sectioned tube
 Price: £239.99
 From: Greys stockists

Snake-skin priests

with a few gentle pulls the leader is limp and straight. Quite a long taper, looks to me like the tippet section is maybe 18 inches, which suits me fine. A slight scrub with Fuller's Earth mix to take off any oils from my hands, dulls the surface sheen. It casts smoothly; the tippet is not floppy; there's enough oomph for a reasonably large or meaty fly and suits me when I want to add a length of softer tippet.

Three leaders in a pack, all 9ft, sizes 1X to 9X, £3.95 per pack – very good value.

From: www.flylineshop.com

There's a touch of fun about these two priests; note the choice of full wells or half wells grips and the choice of carbon fibre or snakeskin shafts (real snakeskin, by the way.) Look closely and you find these are made with rod-building parts, that full wells grip looks like the lower grip of a salmon rod; where the head meets the shaft look for a 'winding check' you normally find just in front of the grip on a rod.

A single blow with either will despatch pretty much any fish I'd catch in UK waters. The grips are a good size, the brass heads are meaty and solid. They look different and they are effective.

Roy Curtis makes a number of different priests. Shafts can be carbon, hardwood or cane, grips can be cork or duplon.



Two factual errors have been pointed out to me in my review of the Rawson and Perrin Sir B in the April issue. I said the ferrules are brass, they are in fact nickel silver. The blank is described as "framed cane" when it is in fact "flamed cane." MA.

From: Roy Curtis.
 Tel. 01323 642478
 Price: £28.00 plus p&p