



TACKLING THE WORLD - 2007!

Former regular at the Bristol Fisheries, **Chris Ogborne** is now senior consultant with Hardy Greys, the Internationally famous tackle maker. This is his insight into what it takes to stay at the very top of the fishing tackle manufacturing world.

Walk along the banks of any fishery these days and you'll hear words such as 'things are changing' or 'not like the old days' or 'fishing isn't the sport it once was'.

Actually I agree with the last comment – it's much, much better!

It's true that anglers in general have a whole new set of topics to worry about. Climate change is at the top of the list and there can be little doubt that this is potentially the single most important factor in all our lives. So too is the dis-proportionate voice of the anti-country sports lobby. But whilst we all whinge about the weather occasionally we surely must appreciate that it's beyond our immediate control and in Britain we thankfully still have a greater diversity of quality fishing available to us than almost anywhere else in Europe.

Whilst the fishery owners, Clubs and Associations strive to get the balance right between commercial common sense and the provision of quality fishing, tackle manufacturers also need to keep up with current demands and increasingly capable, technically-minded and well informed



customers. The IT revolution

has made anglers far more aware and knowledgeable and it is in this arena of a more discerning, demanding clientele that tackle makers must compete.

I've been Consultant to Hardy Greys for the last sixteen years and I can honestly say that never in all that time has the Company had such a phenomenal range of tackle as it does today. Anglers tend to take it all for granted and as they're the ones paying for it then that's understandable. But I wonder if many give more than a passing thought to just how much effort goes into producing this fantastic gear and to keep Hardy Greys flying high in every market sector.

The biggest recent change at Hardy Greys is an in-house policy of product specialist managers – experts in their own field who design and develop tackle specifically geared to the area of the sport for which it is intended. This is so critical to the elusive 'quality factor' that I need to explain:

Not so many years ago, most makers would launch a new range of rods that would include everything from a 6 foot brook rod through to



a twelve foot loch style version, just because that was the way it had always been done. In most instances, it was a joke. You simply can't produce a family of rods with an action suited to both loch style drifting and fishing in tiny streams - it's a complete contradiction. So what we have today is a more focussed 'range strategy' of which the epitome is undoubtedly the Greys Streamflex series. The whole range is designed for river and stream fishing. There is none of the old fashioned 'suitable for rivers, small stillwaters and occasional reservoir' hype - these are rods designed by top river angler Howard Croston specifically for all river angling situations. The concept isn't revolutionary, but it makes a whole lot of good sense.

Take the philosophy one stage further and you have the Greys G-Tec outfits, new for 2007. Ultra desirable and with a revolutionary reel fitting, there are just two rods in the range: a nine footer for 5 weight

line, and a nine foot six inch version for 7 weight. Simplicity itself - all things, to all fish, in all waters. There's also a new G-Tec reel designed for each rod. What words can't convey here is the look and feel this gives to the G-Tec outfits - they have a balance and 'life' to them that just has to be sampled to be believed.

Hardy has changed out of all recognition in the last ten years. It used to have the image - deserved to a degree - that it was all about Salmon and Sea Trout river fishing and that it was slightly aloof, a bit elitist, and very aspirational. Since the joining of forces with the Greys brand all that has changed, except for the aspirational factor. Between them, Hardy and Greys make tackle that anglers all over the World now aspire to own. It's sexy, highly desirable gear.

Most importantly, they make tackle for every single angling discipline. There's a rod reel, line, bag, accessories and clothing for everything from tiny moorland brook trout fishing right through to the big game saltwater scene. A crucial element in design is that Hardy Greys now make the complete outfit, with reels and lines specifically dedicated to the rod in question, thus producing the ultimate balance in the finished outfit.

The key to the company's success is based firmly on design and development. It's all too easy for less scrupulous 'manufacturers' to head out to the Far East and simply buy tackle 'off the shelf' and put their name to it. They become little more than brokers and make no contribution to the game. At Hardy Greys it's not like that at all: every element of a new product is tried and tested in-house. From concept stage a new product will go through many prototypes, testing (often to destruction) by specialists and experts, and subjected to the most rigorous quality control procedures imaginable. Only then will the final samples be fine-tuned by Consultants and Product Managers, before signing-off for production.

Beyond that again, there are experts at work keeping up with the very latest carbon fibre, metal

and material technology. To see just how far things have moved in the technical field just take a look at the new bags or packs from Fishpond and compare them with the old waxed cotton or duck materials. In terms of rugged hard wear, waterproofing qualities or handling characteristics they are pretty much un-recognisable.

A further classic example of hi-tech material development can be seen in the new Zane Ti Titanium reel, which sits at the very top of the Hardy reel range. As a customer said to me at a recent trade show, 'the Blue Riband of reels flies at Hardys flag'. The material itself is so hard that it cannot be machined in the normal way or with normal tools. It takes six days to make each reel and the final result is without question a thing of great beauty - in my opinion it also happens to be the finest saltwater fly reel ever made.

So whether it's bass on the fly in Cornwall, Salmon in Scotland or Norway, Tarpon in the Bahamas, Grayling on the Wylde or Trout on Chew and Blagdon, spare a thought for where it all started. One of the oldest tackle companies in the World, still leading the World in tackle development.

And be proud, because this is a British company that is the envy of the World.



THE NEW G-TEC.

OUTCLASSES

ITS CLASS.

Fast, but forgiving, with a matt grey 'stealth' finish and custom-crafted barstock aluminium reel seat, the new **G-TEC** has the meanest looks, meanest performance, but most user-friendly handling of any rod in its class. Match this with the new multi disc drag **G-TEC** reel for the ultimate performance outfit. Use your grey matter. We do.

Rod available in 9ft #5 and 9ft 6" #7 weight from £299.99.
Reel available in #2/3/4, #5/6/7 and #7/8/9 weight from £139.99.

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