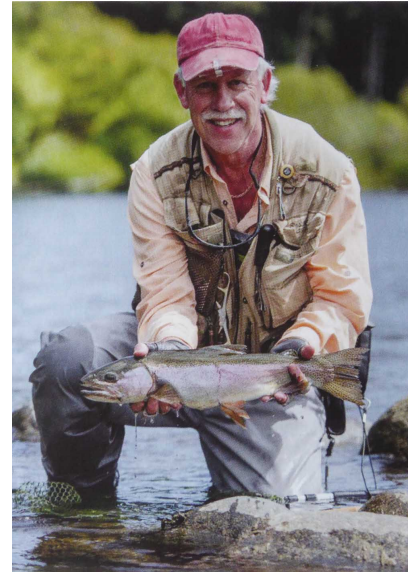


Simon Kidd – recent developments in fishing tackle

Simon hardly needs an introduction to Invicta members not only through his past visits but because the Club run the annual Floating Line competition at Grafham which is sponsored by Snowbee. The company originated from Taiwan in 1978 and established a UK arm in Plymouth, in 1984. Since the beginning of the year, Snowbee was absorbed into the SMG organisation which is a major purveyor of marine electronic equipment.

Simon has been Sales and Marketing manager at Snowbee for almost 20 years but few realise that he started life with Fulling Mill. I certainly did not know that he lived in the Cambridge area for a number of years but now resides back in Devon no doubt preparing for retirement. Another bit of personal information is that his name resulted from his mother reading “The Big Fisherman” at the time of his birth: it had little to do with fishing but rather a fictional novel based on the apostle Simon Peter!



We must be of similar vintage because he mentioned the inspirational paper-back, “Mr Crabtree goes Fishing”, published in 1949, which featured a series of comic strips supported by splendid water colours, depicting the capture of many species of fish. It sold 3 million copies and I still remember buying mine from a newsagent at Taunton railway station during a trip to the west country. It cost 5 bob at the time but pristine copies may now fetch 3 figures. So, I progressed from rods made from bamboo canes, steel tank aerals, split cane, glass and finally carbon. The difference in behaviour between these materials was quite marked both in weight and action but we still caught fish!

The latest material of interest to rod makers is Graphene, a material discovered in The University of Manchester back in 2003. It differs from carbon fibres in that it occurs as a film so thin that a single layer covering a football pitch would weight just 1 gram! The Graphene is incorporated in the resin where it is claimed to assist in filling micro gaps in the composite. Snowbee are not the only manufacturers of rods containing Graphene and the material is to be found over the complete range of game rods from 7-foot brook rods up to 15+ foot salmon fly rods: *it is perhaps not surprising that there are a wide range of opinions regarding their performance.*

The flagship of the Snowbee Graphene range is the Prestige G series, notably the 9’6” range suited to reservoir angling. One of these rods received top reviews in Trout Fisherman. Simon reckoned the Graphene rod was slightly softer which is in agreement with other reports that the tip is sensitive to takes and the rod is forgiving when playing a fish. *I found a reference to Rob Edmunds, who, in comparing the Graphene rod with the original Prestige, “could not really notice any difference (perhaps it’s a bit faster – more tippy) but not a lot”.* Regardless of these differing opinions, the Snowbee Graphene rods at ~£500 are competitively priced. They are 4 piece and supplied in a rigid tube. I liked the high-rise snake rings. Grayling anglers might look at the 11ft #3 rod. The requirements of predator anglers have not been overlooked; those seeking seawater specimens in overseas locations are also catered for. Due care has been taken in selecting accessories made from marine resistant materials.

Three other classes of rod are available, namely the Pro, Diamond and Classic ranges costing typically ~£300, £200, and £100, respectively.



Reels are provided in four ranges. No exotic materials involved but the premier model, the Prestige, is fully machined from bar stock. The cassette version will probably be of more appeal to still-water anglers, and will set you back ~£250, complete with 3 spare cassettes, for the 7/8 model.

The Spectra fly series are also fully machined from aluminium and offers a similar option including a cassette version. According to the Snowbee catalogue this only results in a £10 saving on the equivalent Prestige 7/8 model. I could not see the difference with the Prestige (from the catalogue) but I did note that it was awarded “Tackle Testers

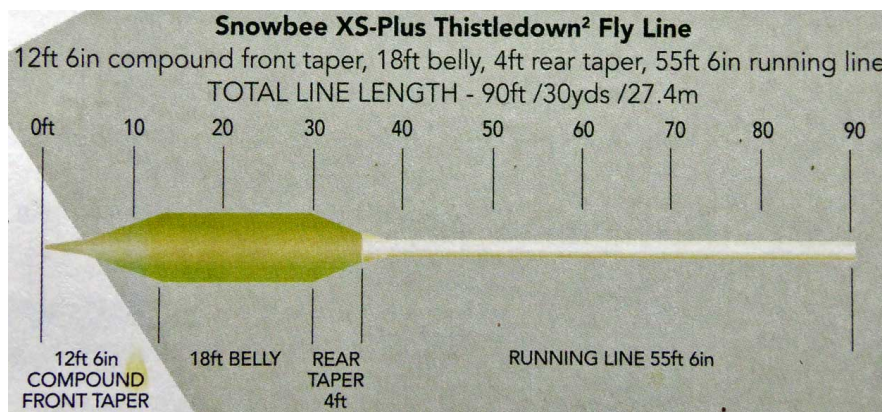
Choice” in Trout Fisherman.

The Onyx range have a machined die cast body but incorporating a polycarbonate cassette. The 7/9 model with 3 spare spools costs £135.

The Classic model is made from a precision moulded glass fibre reinforced nylon. The 7/8 model with 2 spare spools retails at £95.

As someone who started out with the Intrepid Rimfly (19s 6d) with a single spindle core, I appreciate the fact that large arbor reels are now universal. I am less keen on ultralight reels as, from personal experience (not Snowbee), they do not like being dropped on the dam at Grafham! It also seems that there are some companies that render their reels obsolete by regularly changing the design of the cassettes (again not necessarily Snowbee).

Snowbee market an incredible range of lines catering for almost every situation. Prices are not bad either ranging from ~£30 for the basic Classic lines up to £65 for the Spectra models. The Snowbee XS floater was the go-to line for reservoir anglers. The recently introduced Thistledown is designed to assist a delicate presentation: it is unusually thin



for its weight and a single 2# line will load any rod rated between 2# and 5#. It will come as no surprise that several of the Snowbee lines received accolades from Trout Fisherman. I like that the line profiles are depicted alongside their general description. I also liked the recording of the weight of the line relative to the application. *I wonder how many anglers have yet to realise that the AFFTA rating for, say, a standard 7# line is*

185 grains, for a Spey line between 300 & 650 grains, and for a Skagit head 550 grains? So, if you purchase a salmon rod rated at 7#, reservoir anglers will find that their standard lines will not work!! (You will need something like an AFFTA standard 12#).

A starter kit covering a range of rods and reels from the Classic range features a rod, reel and line priced at a significant discount over buying the individual items.

Snowbee have a 40-year record of supplying waders. pp 36-37 in their catalogue provides a useful summary on the selection and storage of waders. The Snowbee range feature 2 breathable models with a price tag of £400 and a top rating in a Trout Fisherman test. Nylon waders (both chest and thigh) are significantly cheaper, regarded as “bullet proof” and have proved popular not only with anglers but also with organisations such as the fire service. Neoprene waders also feature in the range along with the “Granite” made from a flexible grade of PVC.

During the break, it was possible to inspect Snowbee luggage including carrying cases and bank and boat bags. They were constructed from a substantial grade of material and fitted with hefty zips. I can imagine they would resist rough handling and have an extended service life.

Simon resumed by talking about his fishing experiences. He started competition angling in 1997/8 and soon discovered that he was as good as anyone else. He won the English National Rivers championship fishing on the Derwent/Greta in the Lake District in 1998. His multi-disciplinary skills were soon recognised and he fished in numerous competitions around Europe. Consequently, he has travelled widely in the Scandinavian countries, experienced fishing the gin-clear mountain streams in Spain and France, and Grayling in Poland and the Czech Republic.

In a personal capacity he has got as far afield as the river Tongariro which flows into Lake Taupo on the North Island of New Zealand. In the other direction he has been to Vancouver Island on the west coast of Canada. He almost landed a Tarpon on Crooked Island in the Bahamas – he was determined to make amends! He would like to go to the Maldives and the Seychelles.

The Snowbee catalogue is a must read. It is focussed almost exclusively on competitively priced tackle designed for game fishing in the UK by a small team of experienced hands-on anglers. Apart from rods, reels and lines, there is a comprehensive range of accessories even including a float tube. *The only item I could not find was a boat seat! I would also recommend searching Google for videos featuring Simon demonstrating his skills.*

(Illustrations lifted from the Snowbee 2023 catalogue)

November 2023