

Tackling the Trouble

Recently spotting some rods on sale (see my rod review), and contemplating where to wet a line around COVID-19 hotspot and restrictions, and reading my latest Freshwater Fishing mag, I have been a bit re-invigorated on my baitcaster. As many may have spotted a few years back, I have a bit of a collection of Ambassadeur reels, starting from when Bryan Pratt sold me one in the mid nineties.

Although hoping to get back to Central Queensland for some barra chasing this Christmas, it looks unlikely. However, spotting a clearance of baitcaster combos for \$30, it made me think about them being easier for my kids to fish with, similar to Spincast reels. The combo rod is better as a tomato stake, or an emergency yak rod, but the reel certainly exceeded what I tried of my father's first Shimano or Daiwa baitcaster. With not much fishing on the tv, I perused some options of secondhand Abu Garcia reels as bush-bashing (& likely overboard) reels to put on my new rods. I spotted a local sale of a 6600 reel, "with some scratches and in need of an oil", and picked it and a 6500 up for not much more than \$100. I was advised before collecting it that the 6600 was much worse off, which was why they had \$40 on it, but preferring the thumb bar for casting, and having some experience and spares for my old 6600, I was happy to take it.

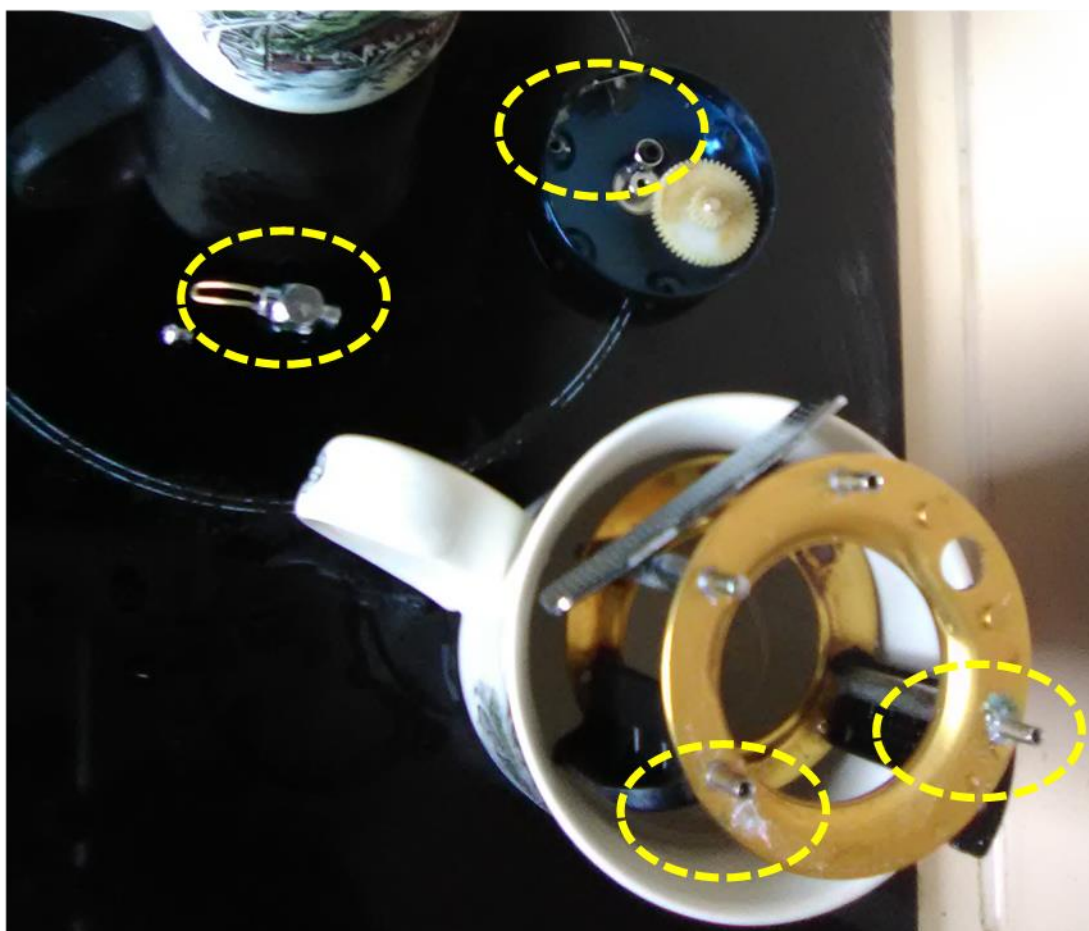
As such, this is a bit of an article on reel cleaning & servicing. There are plenty of good ones out there whilst it is trying to snow outside, recalling that a couple of members out there have baitcasters as well, and in the spirit of recycling.

Before starting there are probably three hazards to watch for when servicing your reel:

- a. Breaking something when trying to remove it (spare parts re usually \$5-\$20)
- b. Loosing small parts like e-clips (two disappeared in my father's garage last CQ trip whilst changing a reel handle)
- c. Breaking/stripping corroded in screws or nuts

Otherwise, crack on! This is the sort of thing you should be doing with your reels anyway, and having a cautious go might give you a great reel, or t worst give you some spare parts. Whilst I probably wouldn't use this reel for chasing PNG bass or other large fish, it will certainly meet most of my fishing needs and won't be too concerning if it falls or I knocked overboard.

I didn't grab any photos after collecting it last night, but gave it an initial brush and soak around the screws. It was quite still – and salty – but still functioned. Not able to find my CRC or Inox, I used some Abu reel oil before remembering I had some Singer sewing machine oil in my study. No point wasting the good oil on the clean-off. Be careful not to get it on your line – or the drag brake once you disassemble it. I let the oil soak overnight, and using a suitably sized screwdriver, undid the main three screws to take the handle assembly off and removed the spool. The spool will need a clean as well, but removing it now will protect the braid, line, and the drag on the side of the spool – maybe soak it in warm soapy water, like your fly line, or at least warm water (if possible, remove the bearings).



Trying to soak the reel frame in vinegar and warm water. Note the white/green corrosion on the gold. The levelwind (top left) had some corrosion on the front of the stainless, and some at the base of the gold coloured wire. The left side of the frame (top right) after rising still has corrosion up near the top on the inside. The screw is from the handle, also corroded.

This allowed me to do the initial strip and clean of the body, which had the most corrosion showing (other than around the handle). Again soaking the screws on the other side, and a suitable screwdriver, removed the screws for safe keeping and later cleaning. The other side of the reel needed a good clean, and having a ratchet that is removable allowed me to take the ratchet mechanism off the body.

A word here on corrosion (oxidisation). Most reels have lots of different materials, even fly reels. Dissimilar metals is a class source of corrosion and this reel is built of aluminium, stainless steel, and some brass. Eggbeaters and other reels also have different metals, and even thinking of your drag, ratchet, or ball bearing – these can all corrode. Oxidisation can be prevented by protective coatings to prevent oxygen exposure (eg chrome or enamels, and to some extent oil and grease), sacrificial anodes (undesirable on reels) or preventing the mixing of corrosive reactive materials. Placing isolators between metals on your reel is not practical, but certainly removing the salt etc from your reel will aid in prevention. Whilst aluminium builds a protective oxidisation layer, allowing the salt to sit in crevices does not.

As such, my goal was to not just give this reel an oil bath to make it look shiny, but to take as much deposit off without damaging the reel further. Sure, the stainless reel frame may not look great, and need a bit more preventative care, but it would be fine for a size fish I usually catch. Normally, I would service my reels at least every season, maybe every session, but life soon takes over and even my old favourites get a bit neglected in the past ten or so years, as I found out last trip to CQ when my own 6600 played up for the first time in over 20 years and I had to put it away until I could get a corroded screw off and fix it.

Next, we will work through the cleaning and tidying up. All needed is a coffee, tissue, (cotton wool bud if you have one), matchstick, and maybe a little bit of vinegar or soapy water....Well, coffee is optional, as you can use a suitably sized container for soaking parts. As such, I needed to move to a bigger coffee cup, as shown in the photo above.



Stripped, and partly cleaned