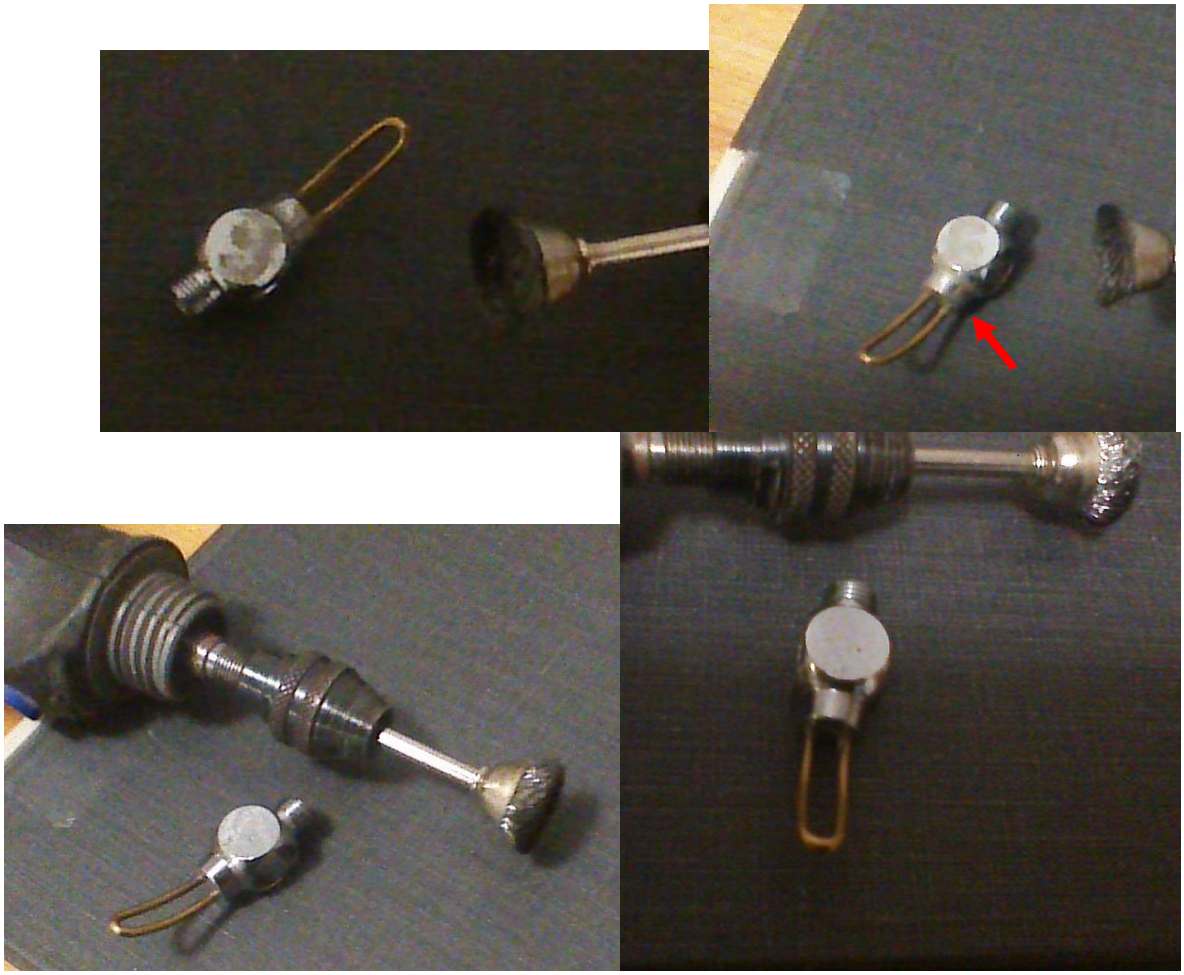
Reely Good

Following on from my Tackling the Trouble, I thought I would spool up the second part.

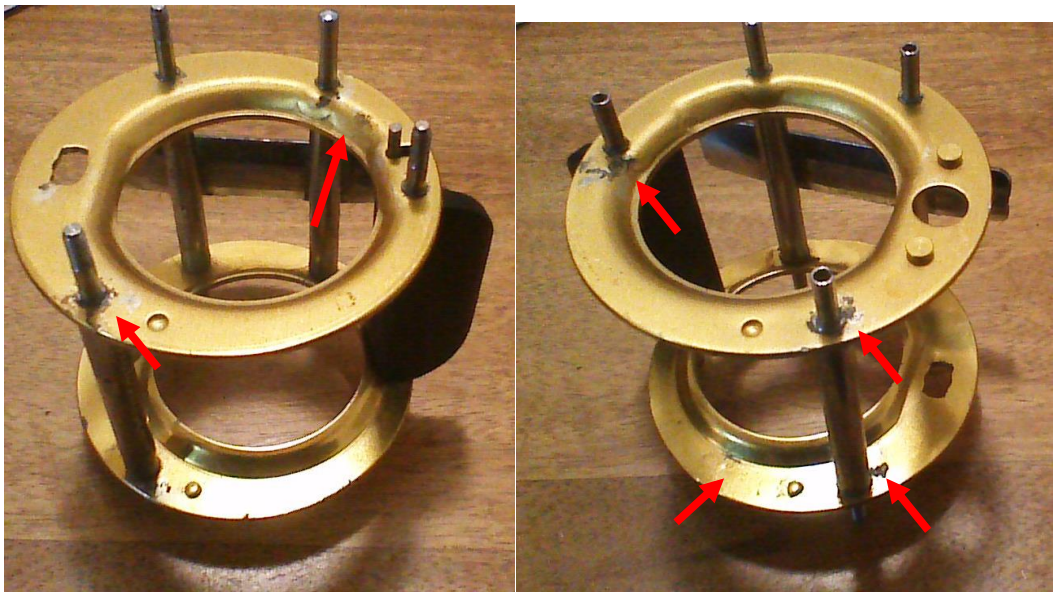
Previously, we gave the reel a bit of disassembly and clean with oil. The corrosion was still pretty persistent, so it as time for a bit more elbow grease.

First was soaking it in some warm soapy water, or a bit of vinegar (not too strong). This helped dissolve the salt a bit. As can be seen in the photo, I also used tissue and a matchstick. The matchstick is good because it is narrow enough to dig into the holes and around the protruding parts, but the wood is soft enough to not gouge the aluminium of the reel. Like how we use toothpicks that are softer than our teeth, the matchstick is cheap and can dig into the corrosion without scratching the metal.

This didn't remove all of it, but did get much of the thin layers off. You could use a stiff toothbrush, or similar, but having a cordless Dremel, I went electric. I noticed the Dremel guide noted the wire bristle brush for cleaning rust off, but giving this a test on the reel base (seat), it took the chrome off to expose the nickel underneath, so I don't recommend that.



Cleaning the corrosion off of the levelwind guide, which had corrosion on the front and back, but also where the guide wire joined the stainless steel. The wire brush worked fine on these section.



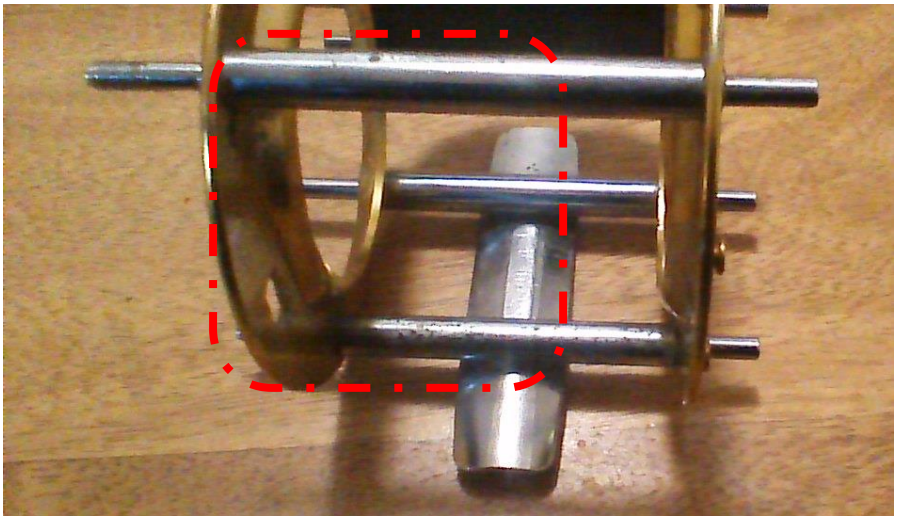
Cleaning the pitted sections where the different metals sat with the salt

Instead, I went to the nylon brush on the body, and that worked a treat. Don't go too fast or you may melt the brush, but I find the T-shaped brush with the bristles perpendicular quite good,

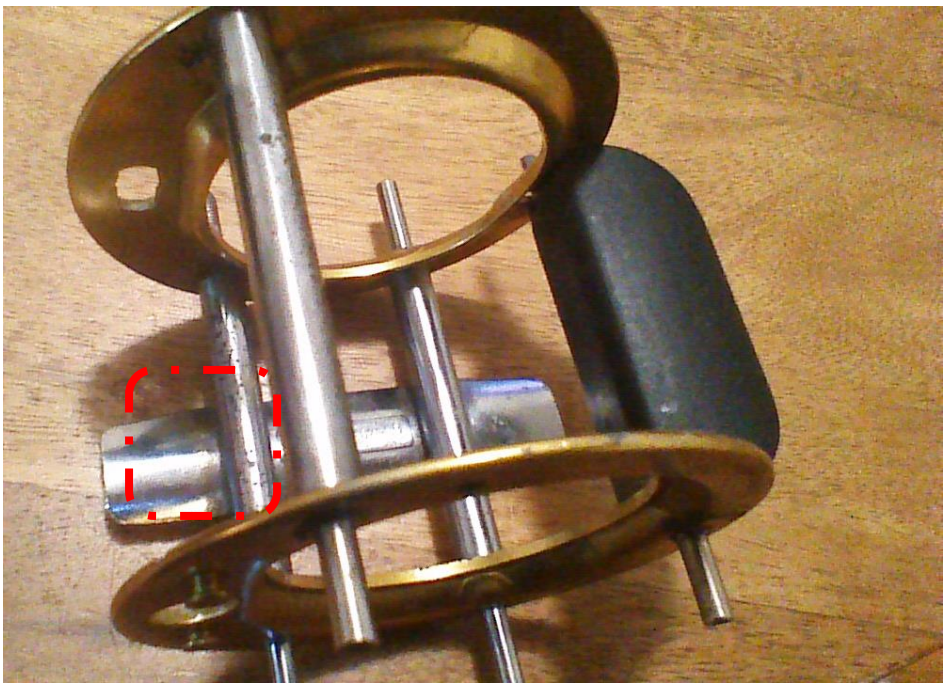
although you could use the tip-brush style to get to hard to reach places. Be careful of your collar on the rotary tool – I have a chuck-style one, which did bur my reel a couple of times,

Give the reel parts another rinse off and dry, before preserving them if suitable with some reel oil. I found the Dremel brush so good that I was even able to get into the ratchet springs and their brackets to clean the salt corrosion up from around it (I note some Abu users drill small drain holes on each side at the base, but I don't intend needing to do that).

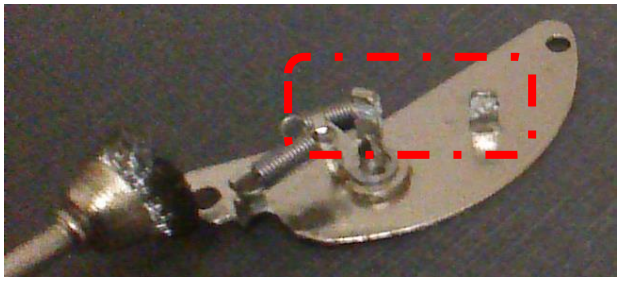
Of course, inspect the parts to make sure they aren't too corroded through, but even the springs were good enough stainless steel to only have superficial corrosion on them. I made sure to preserve them well.



Still some pitting, but not blue/green like it was, ready for a coat of oil



A small line on the base where the chrome brushed through with the wire brush



Cleaning the springs and mounts with the wire brush. The sparkly bits are were the corrosion occurred between the spring and bracket, so I used the wire brush the take this stainless steel back.

Ratchet spring half re-assembled.

Looking much cleaner inside

The drive mechanism can be disassembled from the cover plate to lube it up better, but for two reasons I avoided this. One was I wanted to give it a fish the next day, and the second was the handle was corroded onto the shaft. Instead, I put the silicon reel greased into the grease access holes and worked it into the gears, which quickly restored the moving parts that had dried up. The

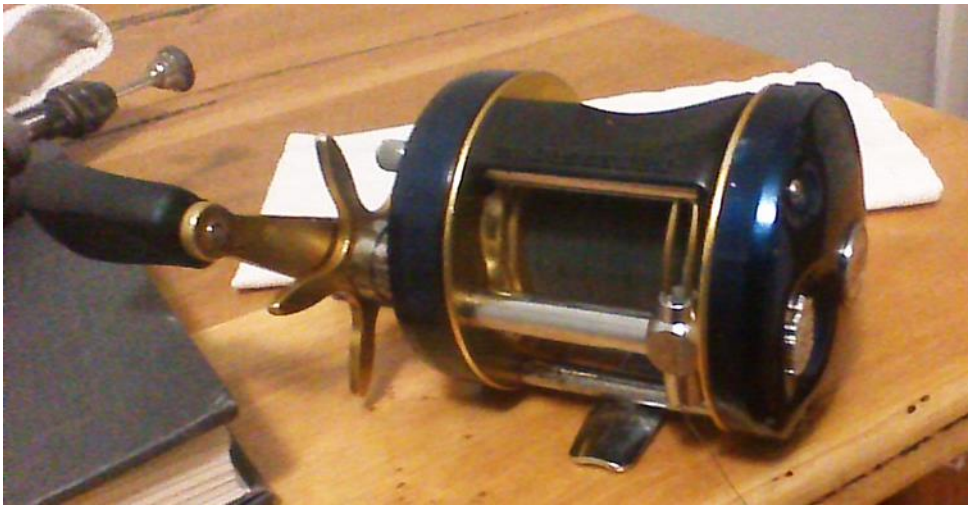
gears hadn't been affected by corrosion, but the thumb lever was stiff until I worked the grease into it. If really stiff, some oil can help it free up.

Be sure to avoid any grease or oil near the braking surfaces (one on the spool, one on the reel). Otherwise, you will lose braking power and may need to replace the brake pad (only my old 6600 Lever Drag, this was cork and I relaced it 15 years ago, but these days Carbontex seems to be a brake upgrade). Rinse the reel spool instead – I also pushed both spool bearings out and gave them a good oil to make sure they didn't get any issues, but they still rolled quite smooth and it appeared most of the corrosion was on the outside of the spool.

I gave the handle shaft thread a good soak, but it didn't want to budge, and figured why bend the handle trying to take it off when Murphy works thing loose when you go fishing. So, I used my tissue and matchstick to clean the star drag and handle, oiled this area and the thumb grips, and semi-tightened the handle nut, before returning the nut lock and the lock's screw (with a small dab of oil as the stainless steel screw previously corroded into the alloy handle). With that, there would be just enough play if on a hot day the alloy handle works loose from the stainless steel shaft, but it wouldn't stop me fishing before I got home to take the handle off.

For the re-assembly, remember to lift the thumb bar up, slide the little plastic momentum brakes back to the centre, and consider lining up the line with the level wind – on all but the Black Max, the levelwind moves with the spool both bringing line in and letting it out out, so having the levelwind and fishing line moving together helps reduce stress on the levelwind (& line), but more importantly helps casting by reducing friction. With these steps, the spool should drop in, and the mechanism side (right side) should go in easily to let the three thumb screws be done up.

Once hand tight, tighten them with a screwdriver (or metal ruler) otherwise they might rattle loose travelling, and you will lose drag fighting a fish when you don't want to. No need to tighten them so they stick like Excalibur (especially after removing all those corroded screws), but in my experience once hand tight, another quarter turn or so will bed them down. You should see the metal pieces are nice and flush, and once passing the line through the levelwind can test the reel release, winding, and drag.



….and out

Before going fishing, don't forget to set the drag, but like most reels, it's a good idea to back the drag off if not using it immediately to save compressing the drag washer. It was looking Reel Nice. Naturally, it is good practice to check the reel works fine so I put it on a rod, and tied on a lure. I also discovered my other discount reel has lead core line (not the dyneema I thought it might have been).

With the weather blowing up down at Eucumbene, I noticed a nice weather window here in Canberra on Saturday afternoon, and invited Bill out for a fish. I would like to say I was actively fishing, but may have been more helping him clear some weed and manoeuvre around some snags when my reel began letting line out.

Seeing the chalky bulk in the water my first thought was carp, and then the profile reminded me of a cod (my biggest …and only cod, was 45cm in Yerrabi). Once closer in though, I realised it was a golden perch / yellowbelly, much paler than the ones I grew up catching in the river in Queensland, but not the deep chunky ones often in dams. It was solid though, nice and thick, and was pleased to both get it on the reel – and the Berkeley baitcaster rod – but also the first yellowbelly I have caught probably since just after leaving school and in my yellow-bellied boat.

After helping my gillie Billy with assembling the landing net, the rod giving a nice tension without working the hole too much in the fish's mouth, we then landed the fish for a couple of photos and measuring at 55cm on my Neptune minnow. Now that's Reely Good….for reel!

Reely good testing playing the fish…..(the reel came up well in the sunlight)

..and the fish waiting to be landed