

GEAR TEST

A new generation Alvey reel is sure to elicit comment. Some will argue that the design has been around so long it's long overdue for a few changes. Others will undoubtedly argue that there's nothing wrong with the reels as they are, so why alter anything.

Having used the new 60A, I must admit the picture isn't completely clear as to which camp I belong.

Certainly, the new reel does several things a little better than my trusty 600 A5, the model it complements, if not replaces.

To get the negative comments out of the way first, those people who use the estuary Alveys for bait fishing with the rod leant against the side of the boat and the reel lying on its back on the deck are not going to like the new model.

Previously, with the reel lying on its backing plate the spool could turn freely — an essential part of the successful fishing technique being discussed.

Because the new 60A has a backing plate that sits *inside* the outside lip of the spool, this won't be possible due to the exposed spool lip coming into contact with the deck and preventing free movement.

Nonetheless, from this aspect the new generation reel offers significant

advantages in several areas. Gone is the familiar yellow fibreglass spool, to be replaced by one constructed in one of the new high tech plastics and dark green in colour. The backing plate is smaller in diameter which contributes to a weight saving of about 150 grams (approximately 5 ounces).

While this is clearly a dramatic weight reduction, the saving in itself is of perhaps lesser importance than the fact that with the new design, the outside diameter of line on the spool is now roughly the same as the older style 650 (6.5 inch) reels.

We'll get to that shortly, but first, a little more needs to be said about this weight business.

Amongst those poor ill-informed souls who are unaware that Alvey reels are far and away the best beach/rock and estuary bait fishing reels around, the most common remark about Alveys is that they're "too darn heavy."

I suspect this may be the underlying motivation behind the Weight Watchers diet the Alvey people have apparently been feeding their products upon, but the real reason these folk think Alvey reels are heavy is (a) they've only ever picked one up in a shop and not been shown how well they work out fishing or (b) if they have ever handled one in the field, it's been on an ill-matched and unbalanced outfit that very quickly

strains various parts of the anatomy, making life quite uncomfortable.

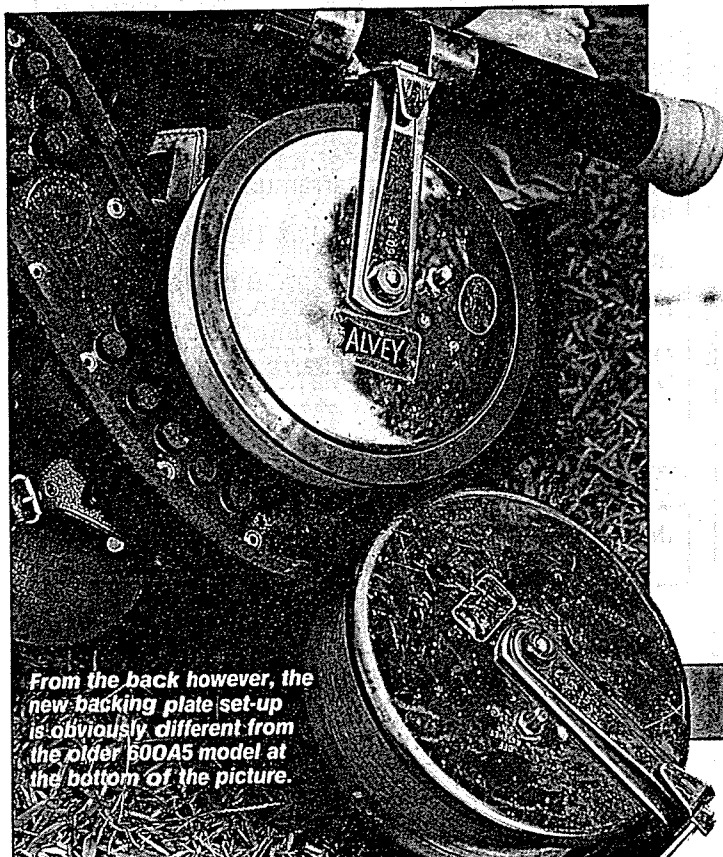
Actual weight in any fishing outfit is a lesser consideration than having it balanced so that the hand falls naturally on the rod while actually fishing.

Being the infinity of shapes and sizes we are, most people's hands fall to the rod in different places and tackle manufacturers obviously can't make gear that suits everybody. A tall person will naturally grip the rod many centimetres above another of slight frame and of lesser height.

An outfit balanced for the taller person will feel top heavy and be very tiring to the shorter.

There are many ways of getting an outfit to balance, not the least of which can be wrapping sinkers in masking tape or something so they jam inside the blank under the butt cap. I had to add over 3 ozs to the butt of my 7162 Butterworth before I could use it comfortably for extended periods.

Having belaboured the point somewhat, the weight saving in the 60A when mounted on some of the new lightweight graphite/glass composite rods is quite significant in comparison to the glass spooled reels used on timber butt rods a few years back.



A NEW GENERATION ALVEY

From the back however, the new backing plate set-up is obviously different from the older 600A5 model at the bottom of the picture.

by Warren Steptoe

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Getting back to the new spool design, it differs in another way from the previous one. As already stated, the 60A spool is larger in diameter than the 600A5. It is also narrower, which means the fingers don't have to travel as far across the spool to lay the line on while retrieving. Anyone who has ever put in a long spin session with an Alvey will appreciate that.

"What's this?" say all the devotees of high tech and complication — you can't use side casters for spinning. Well sorry, but you guys are dead wrong.

Having already expounded at some length the importance of balance and bearing in mind that there's probably many readers who are fairly new to fishing, it's best to go right back to square one.

There are three things that even the knockers agree Alvey reels do far better than any other design — some others can do one or two, but none to my knowledge can do all three.

One. An Alvey sidecast will cast a lighter weight over a greater distance than any other design regardless of wind direction.

Two. Alveys without drag systems are

direct wind and are ideal for fishing in situations where fish must be bodily hauled out of the water. This usually applies to fish below the breaking strain of the line, but also applies to instances such as washing big fish in surf onto a rock platform or beach where they can then be gaffed or picked up.

Three. Alveys (again, the non clutch models) are so simply and strongly constructed that ingestion of enough sand to bring other types to a grinding halt or dropping them on the rocks (within reason) won't stop fishing for longer than the few seconds it takes to remove the spool and flick out most of the gunk. A quick wash in the surf often as not is all it takes to stop the awful grinding noises.

Combined with the powerful light rods around these days, spinning with small metal lures or larger lighter weight minnows etc. off the beach and rocks for tailor, Australian salmon, various trevallies, flathead and even the tropical exotica, is right on.

Although it's never been splashed all over the national fishing mags, any Alvey of retrieve rates equal to or better than the old 6.5 inch models is quite

capable of operating poppers and indeed a select (and quiet) few have been doing exactly that for at least a decade.

With a spool capacity of around 500 metres of seven kilo line, the 60A fits into the lighter end of the usage side.

Apart from the initial comments in relation to boat fishing specialists, this new model does everything its predecessor does and in the areas of weight saving, spool width and retrieve rate/spool diameter, represents a step forward.

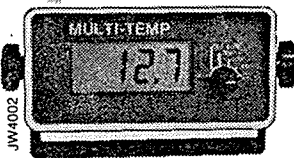
Although the Alvey company is sometimes quoted as a model of staid conservatism, in reality, it's more a case of no point in producing new models every year because their products do the job so well that changes are pointless.

As evidenced by the 60A, changes are made, but it's only when they represent a real improvement over the established standard and while the changes may appear subtle, they are very relevant where it counts — out fishing.

The word is that this model is merely the first of many. It's going to be most interesting over the next little while.

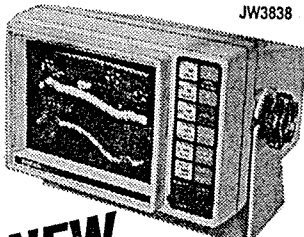
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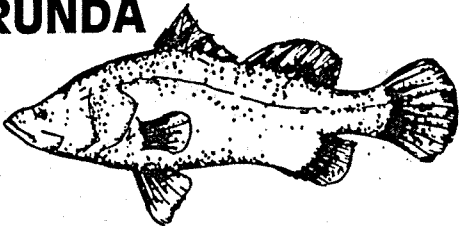
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