

# ART & DESIGN

• A CLOSE-UP ON THE ARTISTS, ARTISANS AND ARCHITECTS ENLIVENING OUR WORLD •

Fit for a prince:  
a Hardy Ultralite  
CLS fly reel, *this  
picture*; splitting  
the bamboo for  
a split-cane rod,  
*below left*; master  
craftsman Calum  
Gladstone glueing  
the Hardy Bros  
rod that bears his  
name, *below right*



ONE OF A KIND

## ANGLING FOR PERFECTION



For devotees of the art of fly-fishing, the name Hardy inspires the same veneration violinists reserve for Stradivarius

BY PETER SWAIN

When Prince Charles's engagement to Diana was announced in 1981, Hardy's of Alnwick, supplier down the years of bespoke fly-fishing equipment to the royal families of Spain, Italy, Norway, Britain and Germany, not to mention the Russian tsars, proposed the gift of two cutting-edge carbon-fibre rods and matching modern reels for the happy couple. The royal groom politely replied that he would in fact prefer a pair of Hardy's original 1912 Perfect salmon reels that had a mechanism and balance to which he was more accustomed. His wish was granted.

The almost Zen-like poetry of fly-fishing, in which angler, rod, reel and fly work in perfect harmony to land a particular species of trout or salmon on a certain stretch of river in varying weather ▶

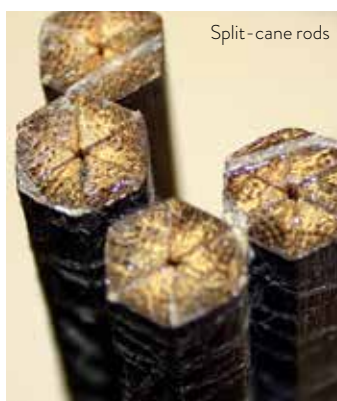




On the fly: trout fishing requires perfect synergy between rod, reel and angler



Mayfly and Zenith rod



Split-cane rods



A stripper guide on a bamboo rod

conditions, is in pleasing contrast to the hustle of modern life. Passionate anglers like American TV mogul Ted Turner and rock guitarist Eric Clapton hail from different backgrounds, yet all agree that a successful day's fishing is like a musical performance in which the skill of the practitioner is paramount, but the quality of the instrument is critical.

From their workshop in northern England, Hardy craftsmen have fashioned all manner of fishing gear for over 140 years, but the company's global reputation is built on the quality and innovation of its rods and reels. Take, as an example, their split-cane fly rod. This tidily combines tradition, artistry, craftsmanship and precision engineering in one object comprising a half-dozen triangular, tapering strips of heat-treated bamboo, which are glued together to make a hexagonal rod of perfect strength, weight and balance, costing about £3,000.

"It's a living thing – nothing plays a fish like a split-cane," avers angling writer

and Hardy historian Andrew Herd. "And having a relationship with the individual rod maker, as many Hardy customers do, is very special. When it arrives, a new rod is miraculous, almost like a newborn baby." Each one bears the name of its creator, either Calum Gladstone or Tom Moran, master craftsmen and legends in their field.

Some of today's anglers favour the 21st-century Zenith double-hander, a 4.57m carbon-fibre and silica-resin marvel, while others, like Prince Charles, prefer stalking the bank with a greenheart rod similar to the one his great-grandfather, George V, used to play salmon on the Dee at Balmoral. And like fine violins, there is no expiration date, so 50- and 75-year-old rods are frequently returned to the workshop to be repaired and rebuilt.

When it comes to the Perfect reel, the most famous of the dozen or so models currently available, "the distinctive sound it makes when a salmon hits the fly, then makes a run, is quite literally music to the angler's ear," says Herd. "Every reel has its own song, and the Perfect sings the most beautiful song of all."

Hardy equipment isn't limited to the riverbank. Titans of big game sea fishing – from Ernest Hemingway, a regular visitor to Hardy's Pall Mall emporium in the 1930s, to Olympic skier-turned-champion angler Andy Mill – have caught record marlin, sailfish and tarpon using the Alnwick suppliers' equipment. The Hardy Zane Titanium saltwater fly reel is the Pétrus of its class and, at £5,500, the most expensive production reel in the world.

Like Purdey guns, Lalique glasswork or Chippendale furniture, Hardy rods and reels are passed through the generations and sought out at auction. They are, quite simply, angling royalty. [hardyfishing.com](http://hardyfishing.com) ◀



Hardy Zane Titanium fly reel