

Two Pins

by [Alan Tomkins](#), Thursday 1st June, 2000

There's been quite a resurgence of interest in centrepin reels during the past 10 years.



the Leeds classic
on the bank



the Youngs Purist
II in its
presentation box

It's been some time since I ventured into print on the technicalities of reels, though some of you may have read my article on the Wallis Cast last year (and hopefully been tempted to try it. Briefly digressing from the main topic of this piece, I'm hoping to be able to put up some film clips of the Wallis cast soon, so watch this space...)

Apart from the Wallis cast article, the last major piece I wrote on centrepins was comparing the old reels with their modern counterparts, an article that was published in Coarse Fisherman and the text reproduced in full in John Bailey's book "Perfect your Tackle". I suppose this article, in which I'm looking at two modern centrepins which are readily available, is an extension of that. I'm always interested in new centrepins coming onto the market and am very keen to try them and compare them with my beloved Aerials and Speedias. The two latest centrepins to go through this process are the Leeds Classic from Lewtham engineering, and the

Youngs Purist II, from the long established Redditch reel makers J.W.Young, manufacturers of the famous Trudex and Rapidex centrepins among others.

The first and perhaps most obvious question (for me at least - others may have different priorities) is how the reel will perform when trotting float tackle down a river. I've used both of these reels straight from the box - neither have had a running in period which I normally find necessary on genuine "pin" reels. Both of these reels run on ball-bearings, and though I don't think the running in process is quite so critical as on genuine centrepins, I think it might help a little if you are going to use either reel on slow paced rivers. In medium or faster paced rivers I find the tendency of both reels to naturally hold back a little to be a positive benefit, but in slow rivers both reels need a helping hand, especially if you are trotting the far bank in an unfavourable wind. In this case any resistance applied by the reel can result in the float travelling slightly across rather than down the current. I have only used these reels for a few months so it is possible they will improve with time in this respect. The Leeds Classic reel, having the larger diameter spool (4.25 inches) as opposed to the 4inch wide Purist, will retrieve line at a slightly faster rate, though this is marginal, and should speed of retrieve be an issue note that both reels do come in larger sizes. So far as the effectiveness of trotting a float is concerned there is little to chose

between them.

The next point to consider is how will they Wallis cast. This may not be a consideration for some centrepin owners, but for me it has a high priority. I've never found ball-race reels to Wallis cast as well as a good genuine centrepin. I can't quite figure out why they don't - they just have a different feel about them. And they are so free running that they can be difficult to control, not slowing down through the cast as a true pin does. However, in practical terms the difference is not that great, and certainly a good ball-race centrepin will cast better than a poor "pin" centrepin, and there are plenty of those about! The other thing which will affect Wallis casting is the weight of the drum, and both of these reels, like most modern centrepins below £400, have drums which are heavier than the old Aerials and Speedias. I understand that the Purist comes in a lighter version, 15% lighter in fact, and I would be interested to see how that model will cast.

One problem which both Aerials and Speedias can suffer badly from is that of the line digging in. This can happen when trotting, or even in mid Wallis cast, resulting in the float gracefully sailing across the river, only to come whizzing back at you as the line digs in and goes backwards round the spool. This problem is exacerbated by the line being held on narrow diameter cross-pins, which make a relatively sharp angle for that line to go across. This can be alleviated to some extent by the use of backing, but to be honest, I've never found a completely satisfactory solution, and suffer the problem now and then when fishing light end tackles. Strangely I seem to be having more problems in recent seasons than ever I did before - maybe it's something to do with modern lines. The Leeds Classic reel, whilst employing the cross-pin system, has relatively thick cross-pins which seems to help prevent digging in to some extent. The Youngs reel has a different system - a solid drum. Whilst adding weight to the spool (which could perhaps be minimised by drilling holes in it?) it does largely solve the problem of digging in, except of course on those occasions you always get it, after landing a heavy fish, or from putting too much line on the reel in the first place. So - to summarise the Wallis casting abilities - again not much to choose between them except that the line will dig in on the Leeds Classic just slightly more often than on the Purist. Both cast quite well.

The drum on the Purist has been thoughtfully drilled with a single hole, enabling you to attach line to the reel by passing it through the hole, and attaching it to a leger stop or something similar on the inside of the drum, thereby avoiding having a knot on the drum for the line to keep catching on. You can avoid this too on the Leeds Classic by passing the line through the cross-pins and attaching to the centre spindle.

Both reels are equipped with a ratchet, and the Purist also has a tensioner, after the fashion of the Aerial reels. I believe you can also buy the Leeds Classic with a tensioner - one of many options available. The ratchet on the Purist is operated by a neat plastic lever on the front (if you reel in left handed) of the back-plate. I like this position as it means that, if required, you can easily engage or disengage the ratchet with the hand that is holding the rod while playing a fish. I'm not sure if you can get the reel with the ratchet lever positioned at the front for anglers who reel in right handed. The ratchet is fairly quiet, and reasonably light.

The Leeds Classic ratchet is operated by turning a round knurled brass knob. For

anglers reeling in with their left hand (like me!) this will sit at the back of the reel (on the model I have) and whether it sits at the back or front, is quite difficult to operate with the hand actually holding the rod. It is quite a noisy ratchet, and is very strong. I've actually adjusted mine by taking the reel apart and bending the ratchet spring - don't worry about taking these reels apart - it's quite safe - nothing falls out - you won't end up hunting for tiny ball bearings on the riverbank, or on your living room carpet. With the ratchet set as supplied on my reel I would imagine that if you were playing a good fish on light (say 2lb) line, then you wouldn't want the ratchet engaged else the line might break.

There is of course a positive side to having a strong ratchet. I rarely play fish with the ratchet on, mostly only using it when setting the rod up, or moving from swim to swim. If your line gets caught on a small branch, then it will easily be pulled from the reel if the ratchet is very light. This is far less likely to happen with a strong ratchet. I tend to keep rubber bands around the handles of my trotting rods, and when moving from swim to swim, loop them around the reel handle to stop line being pulled off should it brush against vegetation. I don't think you would need to do this with the Leeds Classic. An adjustable ratchet, which neither reel has but which the tensioners might help simulate, would of course give you the best of both worlds. Another thing to beware of - I've recently had a couple of fine tipped rods break while setting them up, the top inch or so snapping as I pulled the line down from the tip ring. I reckon this could easily happen if you pulled the line down from the tip ring at too sharp an angle against the ratchet on the Leeds Classic - so beware! It has happened twice to me - and I was using a fixed spool with the bale arm open!

There's not much point in me describing the reels in detail, as you can see what they look like from the photographs. The Purist is loosely based on the old Aerials, while the Leeds Classic is of Lewtham's own design. The Leeds has an internal spool diameter of 1 1/8 inches, while the internal diameter on the Purist is 15/16 inches. As best I can tell from my crappy kitchen scales, the Leeds Classic weighs in at 11 ounces, the Purist at 10 ounces, the weight differential of only 1 ounce perhaps being a little surprising considering the Leeds is substantially the larger of the two. The solid drum on the Purist would probably account for that, and I'd like to see a version that was drilled and lightened as much as possible without weakening the structure. I'd imagine that both back-plates (spool & cage) could be lightened in this way, though perhaps functionally it would hardly make a difference. Certainly if you intend using these reels on some of the longer (20 foot?) rods available today, it would be wise not to use too light a reel, especially if, like me, you suffer the dreaded tennis elbow

The Purist I have came fitted with a line guard (which I removed - it makes Wallis casting very difficult). The reels are serial numbered and each has a certificate of authenticity. They come in a lovely wooden presentation box. Trouble is, now I'm fishing with the reel it will probably be permanently fixed to one or other of my trotting rods, so I don't really know what to do with the box. It's far too nice to throw away, and even too good to take fishing! The Leeds Classic came without a line guard, but you can have it supplied with one if you wish.

For those of you who like to retrieve line by putting your fingers through the holes in the spool, you will be disappointed to know that unless you have fingers like runner

beans, you won't be able to get them through the holes in the Purist. You can however retrieve with your finger through the spokes. The inner holes in the spool of the Leeds will easily accommodate my fingers, but even here, if your fingers are like bananas you might find it a tight fit!

Complaints? Well - err - yes. A relatively small one with the Purist. I found the edges of the brass reel seat to be unnecessarily sharp, so much so that I thought they might even cut through the line should it become tensioned while caught around the reel seat. I used a small file to round off the edges. I understand that Youngs are looking into this and will resolve it soon. Rather more serious on the Leeds is that I've found the line can actually get behind the spool. If this happens the reel will obviously grind to a halt, and it's a screw-driver job to remove the spool. This may not happen often but once is more than enough and I feel it is something which needs addressing. I think this is unlikely to happen while the line is under tension, but if it gets slack then it is something to beware of. The line I've been using by the way is 4lb Maxima, which is not ultra-fine diameter. The spool on the Purist incidentally is more easily removed by pushing down on a small spring clip located on one of the spokes. The gap between reel seat and reel on the Leeds is rather wide. If you have particularly short fingers (I don't) then you might find it a bit of a stretch to reach the rim of the spool to control the reel speed.

Which would I choose? If money was no object, then I'd pick the Young's Purist, if only for it's aesthetics. Don't misunderstand me though, it's not just aesthetics you are paying extra for. The Purist is a very high quality centrepin.

Apart from the line catching up in the Leeds reel there is little to choose between them for functionality. But you pay a price for quality (for aesthetics too). The Purist retails at £195. If you shop around the Leeds Classic is available at around £50-55. Quite a difference, and though there isn't £140 difference in the capabilities of the two reels - both will do the job - the difference in the build quality is obvious. For a first centrepin, particularly if you feel you might not get on with one and may return to the fixed spool, the Leeds Classic represents excellent value for money. I wonder how much a few cosmetic improvements such as a brass reel seat and different coloured handles would affect the price? Not that the Leeds is ugly, far from it. I know many anglers who have used Leeds reels for several years and are more than happy with them.

If you want a reel that looks nice in the traditional sense (though this could of course be a matter of opinion), and understandably can't make the quantum leap to either an old aerial, or one of the more modern bespoke reels such as the Carters or Witchers (minimum £400 these days I think, & often more), then the Young's Purist is a lovely reel to own and fish with. And relative to the Witchers and Carters, and even some of the big fixed spools or multipliers you might own, it is not really that expensive.

I've only dwelt on the reel's capabilities for trotting, but both would, I'm sure, be equally at home legering for big fish such as barbel, or even carp.

Summarising then, little to choose between the 2 reels for actual fishing, quite a lot of difference in the price, but then, as in most things, you get what you pay for.