



# TACKLE BAG

MAGNUS ANGUS puts the latest fly-fishing products to the test

## Luke Bannister 7ft #4 rod

First impressions: short, hence light, with surprisingly little after-wobble despite having a metal ferrule half way down the two-piece blank. The shaft looks like one piece of cane even though I know it's six strips glued together. The nodes are visible but completely smoothed down. It's interesting the blurb says this is a hollow-built blank which reduces the section weight.

The ring set is conventional and classy. Whippings are 'invisible', the rings are attached with fine light coloured thread – silk, I assume – which is then varnished so the thread appears transparent. The feet of all the rings are ground small and smooth, which looks good and helps prevent the thread being damaged during tying.

These tyings look like they have really been varnished. D'oh! The effect is not what I normally see on carbon rods where a coat of relatively viscous self-levelling epoxy encapsulates the thread and foot of the ring. This looks like each whipping has been treated with coats of thinned varnish.

The cigar-shaped grip sits comfortably in my hand, and has been turned from very high grade cork with no filler. The down-locking reel seat would look odd on a carbon rod but suits cane. With a light reel fitted the rod balances exactly on my forefinger at the front of the grip.

In terms of craft, this rod is of a very high order indeed.

Casting with a couple of standard WF lines I found myself handling a pleasing punchy wee rod. I assume the lack of wobble and crispness of this rod is in part

at least down to the hollow build. The action is technically slow but the stiffness seems to me to suit #3 and #4 lines. Loop control was good and loop shape pleased me. The Bannister didn't seem to flinch when I applied my normal hauled casting style. Quite the opposite, it seemed to thrive.

Whilst throwing line about with this rod I found myself puzzling over something I read recently. According to the author I should move cane rods slower, in sympathy with the lower natural frequency of cane. Really? Why? With a given line, to cast a fly to a target means getting the line moving in the right direction, fast enough – regardless of the materials used to make the rod, the line needs the same line-speed, the same momentum, to reach that target. Far from being a more serene, more tranquil casting tool, because a cane rod is heavier than a carbon rod, if anything I work harder to get the fly where I want it to go. Maybe I should leave aside puzzles about how we describe what it feels like to cast a fly rod before I get started on rods with 'souls'!

This is a beautifully crafted rod which performs well. For me, a cane rod is about craft and tradition, and knowing the name of the person who made the thing, seeing and holding the result of his skill and his knowledge. This rod is a useful tool made from a classic material.

Cigar grip fits comfortably in the hand.

The down-locking reel seat suits cane.

Whippings are 'invisible'.

Know the name of the person who crafted the thing.

### Luke Bannister 7ft #4 2-pce

Sections: 2

Action angle: 55°

Stiffness: 73.1 grams

Weight: 112.8 grams

Rings: Lined butt ring, snakes

Handle: Cigar

Cork quality: Very high

Reel seat: Down-locker with dark wooden spacer

Blank: Cane

Thread: Transparent

Build quality: Excellent

Rod bag: Canvas

Rod tube: Heavy metal

Price: £825 (also available with two tips and leather tube)

From: The Alternative Tackle Company. Tel. 01253 808447 or 07941 313329

(www.alternativetackle.com)