

Evolution of the fly angler

With the prevalence of today's part-hunter, part-SWAT team look, it's easy to forget that the flyfishing wardrobe hasn't always been so flattering...

LAZY TV scriptwriters, of course, think we still look like that. If the plot calls for an angler, chances are he'll turn up on screen in a bobble hat and cable knit sweater. Casting like a dolt for good measure.

With the benefit of a little research, those writers would know what we do, that while the music of the '70s might be

fondly remembered in many quarters, the same can't be said for most fishing clothing and equipment.

Just look at Mr 1970s below for example. Ignoring the fact that it looks to have been knitted by his mother, that sweater will have been merciless whenever conditions changed from windy to sunny or showery. Given that rods were yet to acquire

today's wispy lightness, casting one with an arm entombed in sodden wool would have brought Fatima Whitbread to a sweat. The next 40 years would see a gradual shift away from natural to man-made fibres, and 'wick' become more verb than noun, the effect being to withstand more weather with less material, which in turn lets body moisture

out without letting raindrops in.

Waders progressed from rubber's waist-down sauna to breathable fabric that kept you dry *and* temperate.

It wasn't just our apparel that changed, of course. Fibreglass rods were on the way out and carbon on the way in when *TF* was born and our ancestors would marvel at how light yet strong today's quality rods

are. Fly-lines have gone from being almost exclusively floaters to the multi-taskers of today, available in a range of densities and tapers, for all types of presentation at all depths.

Regarded as more durable and less visible than nylon, fluorocarbon leader was seen as a similar game-changer when it first arrived in flyfishing in the 1990s,

yet many anglers hail reduced diameters as the real quantum jump in leader design; allowing modern tippet a slenderness that belies its strength.

As for where kit and clothing are headed over the next four decades, we see only two definites in the *TF* crystal ball – fly rods can't get much lighter and home-made sweaters aren't coming back... ⚡

1970s Angler

Fibreglass rods

Looked chunky and felt it, although some retro river anglers still appreciate their 'feel'.

Fly vests

Big help with mobility, this 1930s American invention was popularised over here by Bob Church in the 1970s.

Reels

Relatively little change, except much lighter now and with large arbor options available.

1980s Angler

Everyday sweaters

Their last hurrah before the dawn of the waterproof, breathable specialist fleece.

Bush hats

Bit of a Vietnam War throwback, perhaps, but popular at the time.

Waders

Goodbye, boil-in-a-bag rubber, hello PVC and nylon-coated fabric.

1990s Angler

'Layering'

One thick sweater replaced by thin layers of modern fabrics.

Countryman's hat

Shading the head beneath a knackered ozone layer, this seemed perfect. And yet...

Landing nets

Knotted mesh found damaging to fish. Gave way to knotless nylon micro-mesh.

Neoprene waders

Warm, but breathed like a corpse. Best for cold days with no long walks.

2000s-Modern Angler

Baseball cap

Culturally cool but minimally protective. Progress or regress?

Breathable outdoorwear

Around since the '80s but now 'mainstream'. Finally, rain kept out was no longer negated by condensation trapped within.

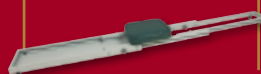
TACKLE MILESTONES

1971 Fluorocarbon fishing line created in Japan.



1976 Hardy produce the first carbon-fibre rods, which are far lighter – and easier on the arm – than the old glass fibre rods.

1978 *TF* reports on first customised boat seat.



1979 Dave Shipman creates the Shipman's Buzzer.



1982 First Euro tackle trade association exhibition whereby the trade showcase the latest gear to hit the shelves.

1985 First Wheelyboat launched.



1988 Orvis long-term rod warranty starts trend as rest of trade quickly follow. But the lifetime warranty idea is fading away now.

1990 *TF* hails Dog Nobbler as the fly of the '80s.



Early 1990s Float-tubing arrives in UK from USA.



2010 Hardy launch SINTRIX nano-particle rods that are lighter and very strong. They claimed these to be almost unbreakable.

2014 *TF* tests magnetised hook theory from USA. Increased fish interest was noticeable during the test at Roxholme.