

Nov. 2015 ©

Murvall

prototype

reels & notes

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Please note...

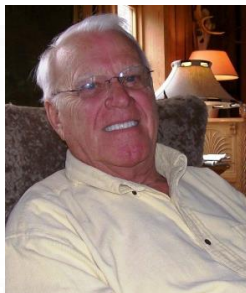


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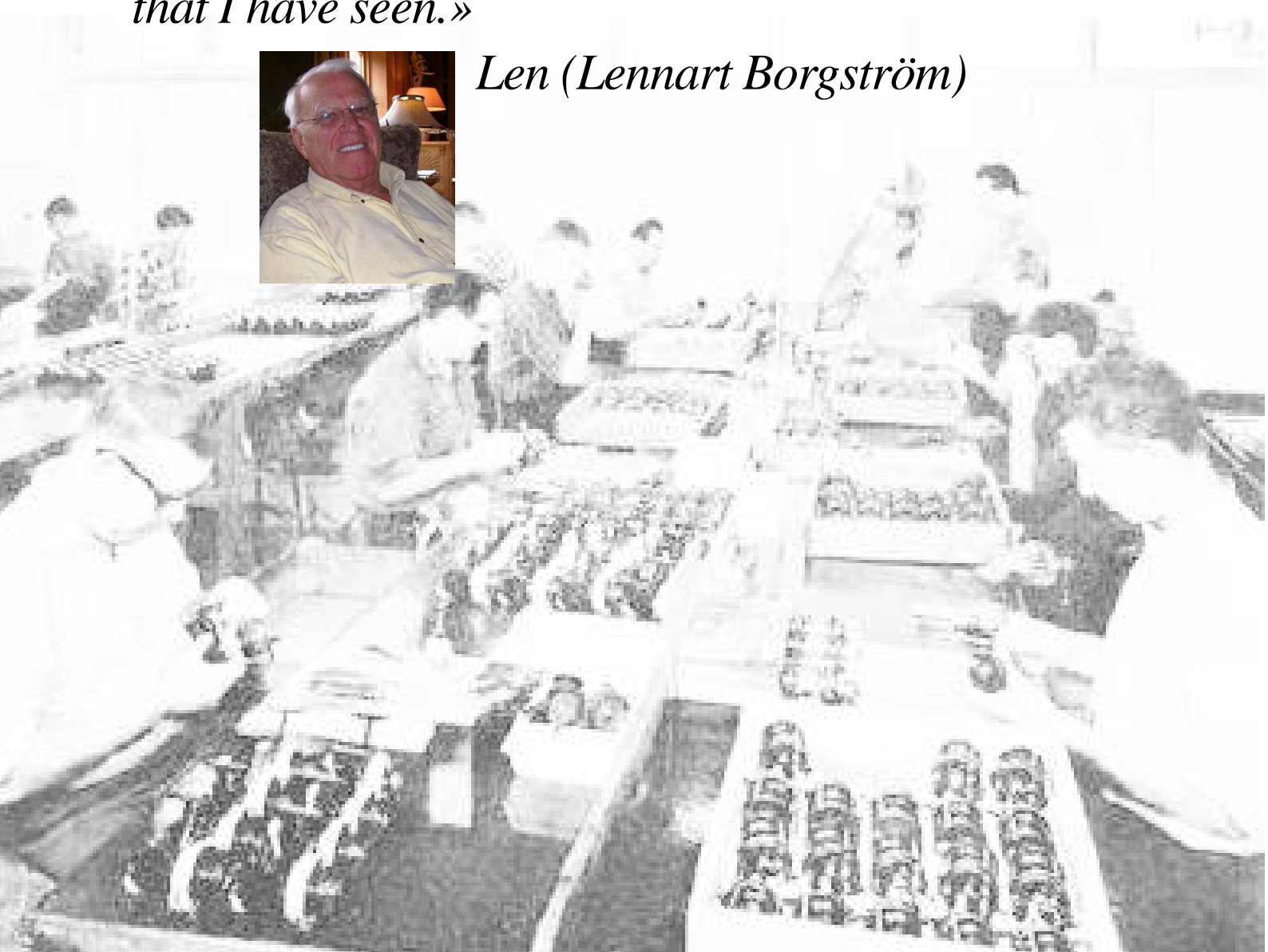
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Per Erlandsen - Wayne Real.

«I could not find anything that I considered wrong in this great work by Per and Wayne. It is really the best documented information about the Ambassadeur that I have seen.»



Len (Lennart Borgström)



Åke Murvall was a fascinating person, a highly skilled and well educated engineer and a man with an eye for the wonders of mechanics. The Ambassadeur reel is his greatest achievement... We, the lovers of ABU and most particularly the Ambassador, stand in awe of this man, and are ever beholding to his meticulousness in design and record keeping...

Many who knew Åke Murvall did not know he kept a small private collection of reels. He wasn't a collector in the true sense of the word and he kept the reels more as documentation of his work than as show pieces. His reels were not on display, but stored along with a few other items from his career. This attitude is reflected in the reels he kept, they are the milestone reels from the Ambassadeur project. Reels like the early prototypes (I know he kept these although they were gone by the time I saw the collection for the first time), the color test prototypes and the first production models. The only exception here is perhaps the reel carrying number 50000, the first Ambassadeur to receive a serial number and given to him from Göte Borgström in 1956 in appreciation of his work for ABU. This reel was presented in a wooden box, perhaps the first example of an ABU gift item in a display box.

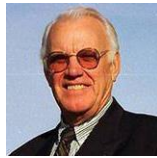
The majority of Åke's reels show few signs of use, maybe he didn't fish a lot, or maybe he had other reels to use by the river? I believe he was genuinely proud of the Record 5000 and the later Record 6000 reels and I like to think he would dwell over the prototypes and feel immensely satisfied with his accomplishment. There is no other reel in the history of reels which have changed as much as the Ambassadeur, and no other reel has been equally important for ABU. Needless to say these reels are now the pride of my collection. They are rare treasures, they come with both providence and history, and they once played an important part in the earliest events which lead to the arrival of the world's most legendary reel. To know that Åke Murvall held these reels in his hands and treasured them enough to keep them in pristine condition adds immensely to the joy of owning them...



Whenever big money is involved, there is bound to be some out there trying to fake their way to a large profit. So, there are probably fakes, and probably collectors who have spent big money on reels which has been manipulated to look like an original early prototype. I fear too much detailed information may help those with bad intentions, which is why there are no pictures from Åke's notes in this article. If you own a rare, early Record 5000 or consider buying one I will gladly assist with assessing its age and originality. Please contact me by mail - persbox@online.no

One item in Murvall's collection is more valuable to me than any of the reels. It's a notebook which Åke seems to have kept with him throughout the entire Ambassadeur project.

These notes are a treasure. They express his private and personal thoughts from early on when he was assigned to the job, onwards to the end, when the brilliant Ambassadeur reel had found its form and entered production. There is a wealth of information chronologically recorded as the project evolved, small notes to remember, his personal views on issues discussed with Göte and others, ideas, test notes, decisions that were made, and more. This book ends some of the speculations and discussions because the answers are recorded real time as the events took place. For instance, the decision to make reels in multiple colors to test market response is mentioned in the book, not just as a reference to the test, but with accurate numbers of reels made in each color and where they were exhibited. In some sense, reading the notes and looking at the sketches takes me back in time and into the rooms of ABU during the crucial period when the most important reel in the company's history was made. One day I will write a book about these events, for now I will just connect some of Åke's notes to some of the reels he left behind...



Lennart Borgström on Åke Murval...

«Åke worked for a company, Fundator, who made the spools for the original Record casting reels. He came to Svängsta to learn about the reels and was very surprised to see how rudimentary our manufacture was. My father realized that we needed a qualified engineer to help us establish more effective production methods and hired Åke. He did a marvelous job for ABU and changed almost all our products.

As for the Ambassador, my father had very specific ideas about this new reel. These ideas were based on the practical fishing experience we got from fishing salmon in the Mörrum river. Göte wanted the centrifuge brake system, a brake to wear down a rushing salmon, disengaging spool and a line guide system and the job of designing the new reel was given to Åke. I recall my first reaction to the Ambassador was that it felt heavy. I think the weight issue was in part why the debate on the line guide system was brought up. Despite the weight, as we know, the Ambassador became our most significant success ever.

Åke was a nice man to work with, only problem you could have with him as a boss was that if someone asked him for help to solve a problem, he would throw himself at it, and solve the problem himself, and quite often his solution would be a completely new one that no one had thought of.

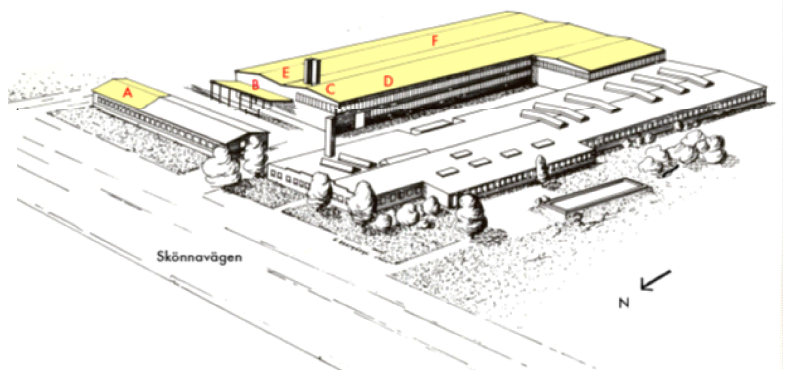
I recall one episode which I think illustrates the way Åke worked. He used to sail with me and on one occasion, after having asked if there was anything he could do for me, I asked him to design a small rack for drinks for my boat. He immediately started taking measurements, sketching up ideas and drawing up design details and did nothing else for the rest of the day. That's how he was, enthusiastic and eager and full of ideas and always with pen and paper ready to go to work.»

Len.



Fundator building in late 1940s
ABU Svängsta factory in 1951
The growth of ABUs Svängsta factory between 1943 and 1958

Åke was head-hunted from Fundator AB in Sundbyberg when Göte saw the need to modernize the manufacture of ABU's products. Fundator was a pressure foundry and produced the spools for the original Record casting reels. In 1951 ABU's factory in Svängsta only consisted of the small building shown in the 2nd photo. The work to enlarge this building started in 1952 and was completed in 1953. The 3rd photo shows the considerable growth of the ABU plant between 1943 and 1958. The first Ambassador reels were painted and chromed in the basement of the Svängsta plant. In 1973 all paintwork and chroming was moved to the ABU AB Multifabriken in Örkelljunga. ABU had acquired this plant when the previous owner, Addo-Facit, closed down production in 1972. Apart from surface treatment of reel parts ABU manufactured their spinning reels in this factory up until 1978. A total of 4 801 511 ABU spinning reels were produced here between 1972 and 1978. Len confirms that parts for the Ambassador and other ABU reels were also sent to the Multo factory for anodizing and chroming. Distance between the ABU production plants in Svängsta and Örkelljunga is around 130 km.



ABU AB Multo factory in 1972.

early prototypes..



Creators of the Ambassador reel..

It was Göte Borgström who had the visionary idea to hire Åke Murvall. The pair worked together on the new design, perfecting it until it superseded any other reel the world had seen or would see for the next 30 years...

I normally refer to the Record 5000 prototypes as TYPE 0, TYPE 1 & TYPE2..

Types 0 are the earliest prototypes made mostly before the use of aluminum and colours (before March/May 1951).

Types 1 are the first coloured reels, made in aluminum in March/May 1951.

Types 2 are the reels specially made for the colour-test program in October/November 1951. I also include 2 reels made in 1952 shortly before and as the production started up.

The earliest prototypes of the Record 5000 reel were missing from Åke Murvall's collection when I first saw it and I know nothing of their present whereabouts. All I know is there used to be a few more reels and that these reels were not painted in any colour...

One of the most intense discussions ABU collectors have is that of the early colour test prototypes. Not strange since these reels are extremely rare and valuable. Finding one is sometimes described as the holy grail of ABU collecting. I have heard many opinions and arguments and at least 7 different colours for these reels have been suggested to me. Here I bring you some extracts of things written about this in the past and my comments on how these events were recorded by Åke..

Len Borgström in his book **ABU and Garcia: What Happened?** (p. 59):

»Until this point, all reels had been either nickel- or chrome-plated. Since the Ambassador was made of aluminum, it suddenly became possible to manufacture reels in different colors. We presented a variety of colour models and decided to let the sport fishermen choose which color they preferred. In those days, **ABU** often participated in a Stockholm exposition, which was very well attended by the general public. We displayed four different colors at the exposition: red, black, gold and green. The visitors were asked to vote on a color, which we would then use in production. By a large majority, the voters selected the green; however, my father preferred the red, so the first Ambassador reels produced were red.»

Comments by realreels.com:

This story has been told and retold in coffee shops, books, and on websites over the years. Everybody agrees about the red, black, and green reels. Variation mostly concerns the fourth (and sometimes fifth) color. Borgström, who should know, says gold. Others say yellow, purple, or blue. The black reels come to auction fairly regularly. The green reels are exceptionally rare. But I have never seen even a photo of the «fourth color» reel, and no Swedish collector or retired **ABU** employee I have spoken to knows the present whereabouts of such a reel.

There is disagreement about the numbers produced of these test reels. Some say 20 of each color, others say 100, or something in between.

Rumors of an early test to decide the colour for the new Ambassador reflects the actual events. Åke makes several notes on colors, and describes in detail what was actually decided when the issue was finally settled. Åke's notes give us enough insight to separate fakes from originals and settles the debate on how many were made and what features these reels should have, and should not have. Len was right on the fourth colour, it was golden, not yellow as some have claimed, but it was probably not exhibited during the colour test. The existence of a fifth, blue reel is confirmed by Åke, but where this reel is, is unknown. It was rejected in May 1951 and it never played an important role in the events leading up to the final decision on colour.

Åke's notes..

A meeting took place at ABU in May 1951. 5 different colors were shown. These were red, black, green, blue and gold. The decisions made are accurately recorded by Åke: the blue and the gold colored reels were rejected and it was decided to test the other colors for customer response. 20 reels in red, black and green should be made for this purpose. A later note shows that these reels were made in October/November 1951.

The five colored reels showed at the meeting in May 1951 were not the first colored Ambassadeurs. The debate on color started in February and the very first Ambassadeur to wear color was a red mock-up presented to Göte Borgström in March. On seeing it, Göte was very impressed, Åke notes, and instantly wanted to see more reels in different colors. This resulted in the five prototypes showed at the meeting in May.

The March reel was not functional and was not fitted with more than a few mechanical parts. It was a show-piece to indicate what an Ambassadeur would look like in color, but it was the first anodized reel and it introduced Göte to the famous red color which later became one of the Ambassadeur's most significant trade-marks.

My conclusion:

Counting the 5 reels made in May, we have a total of 21 red, 21 black, 21 green, 1 blue and 1 in gold color. These are the original 1951 test prototypes. In addition to these fully functional reels Åke's notes mention one non-functional red mock-up made in March 1951.

...collector **Mikael Risberg** has noted the relative «abundance» of black reels compared to green reels; according to him, as many as five black reels were traded in 2008 to 2009. Why the disparity?

Daniel Skupien, in *Vintage Fishing Reels of Sweden*, offers one explanation (p. 70):

»Some of these are early prototypes used by **ABU** in the early fifties in a market study of color preferences. Others were manufactured as special orders. It is rumored, for example, that a number of black units were ordered in the mid-fifties by a car dealership in the USA. It was intended that they would be thrown in as a bonus with the purchase of an automobile. The sale did not go so well, however, and the remaining stock was returned to **ABU** in Sweden. Many years later, these reels found their way to a tackle shop in Stockholm's Gamla Stan (Old Town) where local collectors picked them up.»

A further clue to the «proliferation» of black reels comes from **Borgström** (p. 59):

»Only the conservative British continued to insist on black reels the first few years. The thought of a red fishing reel by a fine Scottish salmon river was a shock to them.»

www.realsreels.com:

British erythrophobia might also explain why production of the black 5000 continued after «Record Ambassadeur» was changed to «**ABU** Ambassadeur» (around 1957) and why **ABU** also produced a black 6000.

What this means is that there are probably different versions of the black 5000 around. The earliest test reels should have a polished brakeplate and a gray starwheel; later versions should have a gray brakeplate (ca 1953-1957) and a black starwheel (ca 1954-1957). There might have been changes to the spool along the way. There might even be black reels with the S.G. designation on the tailplate (ca 1952-1953) or with a «neither Record nor **ABU**» tailplate (ca 1957), although I have never heard of any. And Risberg reports that the reels sold in 2008 and 2009 had roman numerals (color codes) scratched on the inside of sideplates and frame; these were apparently absent on the first test reels.»

My observations on black and green reels...



Green Record 5000, but not a colour test prototype...

This reel is made around 1955-59 and the obvious difference to the true colour test reels are the green spool flanges and star wheel.



Another example of a reel which may be confused with a colour test prototype. This black Record 5000 is probably a 1953 model made for the conservative British market. The grey brake plate show it is a production reel and not a prototype and the mechanical components are identical to those found on the MOD SG. I have yet to see a black Record 5000 with a MOD SG stamp...

Although I have seen a few green and black Records, these reels are rare. The colour test prototypes are even rarer, counting all colours I only know of 9 in total, 2 are green and 2 are black. 4 of the colour test prototypes I have seen are in my own collection.

Black Records are more abundant than green ones, but almost all black reels I know or have seen are not colour test prototypes. In fact, only two of those I have seen are. The others are all later reels and I have yet to see a black Mod SG.

I cannot confirm the stories told about colour testing by ABU connected to the name change from Record to ABU around 1957 and I find it quite unlikely that ABU would have considered changing the colour of the already famous red Ambassador. Åke mentions early sales of black reels on two occasions in his notes and confirms that black reels were made for the British market. These reels were made early in 1953. All of these reels meet the Mod SG specifications and comes with grey brake plates, grey spool and grey star wheel, but they were not marked with MOD SG (see next page for more on this). Black Record 5000 may also have been produced in 1954 and later, but there are no reference to this in Åke's notes.

Another thing I cannot confirm is the rumor of a production batch of black Ambassadeurs for an American car company. What I do know is that some black reels were returned to ABU from somewhere and that they were sold to Swedish customers through a shop in Stockholm. But this happened in 1959 and has nothing to do with the prototypes or the early production runs of the Ambassador reel. This information was confirmed by two buyers and by one employee of the shop and makes the rumours of ABU and the American car company plausible in my mind. I have seen two of these reels and although they are produced after 1956 they did not carry a serial number. They are similar to the red 1958 models stamped Record, but were stamped ABU and came with black spool flanges and black star wheel.

It's a fair assumption that most of the green Records we know exist, are models made in 1953 or later. They were either produced to special orders, or made privately by employees at ABU. The green reel photographed by Lonnie Mills and presented elsewhere on this site proves that at least one green reel was stamped ABU and not Record. The real colour test prototypes are quite easy to pick out once you have the knowledge of what to look for and the chance to examine the reel's interior. One should also note that the green of the colour test reels are a different shade of green from all the other greens used by ABU.

One peculiarity is the information that the early prototypes had red numbers in the centrifuge brake graduation. I have seen this on only two actual colour test prototypes, not one of my reels have the red numbers and I cannot find a single reference to the red numbers in Åke's notes.

According to Åke's notes, two batches of reels were made during the two last weeks of August 1952. These are nearly identical to the colour test reels, have no MOD SG stamp and are stamped with the fish logo and «Made in Sweden». They also carry a number stamped on one end of the foot and these numbers ran from # 1 to # 100 (not 001, just 1) - in other words, there are 100 of them. The intention was to hand these reels out to shops and put them on window display. Åke apparently had no part in this decision and he only makes a short remark about them in one note. These reels are easily mistaken for being true colour test reels, but it is possible to distinguish the two by the numbers they carry. Except for the reel stamped # 100 the number sequence is 1 - 99 for the sales samples reels, whereas the colour test reels have numbers from 100 – 122 and the true colour test prototype # 100 is not a red reel. Sales samples reels made in August 1953 are very hard to find, I only know of 5, the lowest number being reel # 10, and the highest I have seen being reel # 89.

Another two reels were taken off the production line as the first production reels were completed. They are identical to the MOD SG except for the foot stamps and these reels carry the MOD SG stamp. They are numbered in accordance with the colour code system used for the prototypes, but lack the Record fish logo and the «Made in Sweden» stamp. I prefer to call them type-2 prototypes even if their purpose may have been only to document the production specifications of the new reel. One such reel was kept by Åke and I have no information on the other one.

MOD SG designation...



One puzzling question to which I have no conclusive answer, is why the production reels were stamped with MOD SG. What does this mean? Daniel Skupien claims it means «Spæriska Glidlager» and this theory was initially supported by Lennart Borgström. But the problem I see is that Åke does not mention this term a single time in his notes, nor does ABU use it in any of the early marketing of the Ambassadeur reel. «Självcentrerade glidlager» may be a better suggestion and this term occurs in Åke's notes. The translation of this would be something like self-centering bearings... Len suggested this explanation in one of our discussions and I now personally think this is the correct answer to the question of the meaning of MOD SG.

In my first launch of this article I did suggest that the term could have something to do with Göte Borgström, and that a note from Åke suggested this, but after having been asked about this I devoted quite an amount of time going through all the old advertising and what had been written about this in the past. My conclusion after all this work is that Len's suggestion of «självcentrerade glidlager» is the most likely one, and that my assumption of a link to Göte was wrong. The reason why I landed on this conclusion is that if the Göte link had been correct, ABU would not have had any reason to drop the use of the MOD SG designation on the black reels made for the British market in 1952. But they did, and the only explanation can be that they saw the reference to the bearings as a Swedish term which would not be understood in Britain.

The model selected for the Ambassadeur production reel was cheaper to manufacture, but heavier by almost 25 %.



Debate on line guides..

Only a short time before the final specifications for the Ambassadeur reel were set Åke suggested a number of changes and presented a new prototype. The changes were not accepted and Åke felt ABU missed a chance to improve the reel. One of these new suggestions was a lightweight line guide. He argued that a lighter part would have a direct effect on the casting performance of the reel, but his arguments weren't heard and the production reel was fitted with the heavier and earlier design. One reason for this decision was no doubt costs, but it may also have been that the proposal came too late and would have delayed the introduction of the reel. The photo show how ABU used a very similar design many years later, but on this occasion they missed the weight reduction achieved by Åke and the new part is significantly heavier than Åke's lightweight original. Len confirms that weight was not a consideration when the new part was made and states that the concern was only to save the cost of hand polishing the front of the line guide.

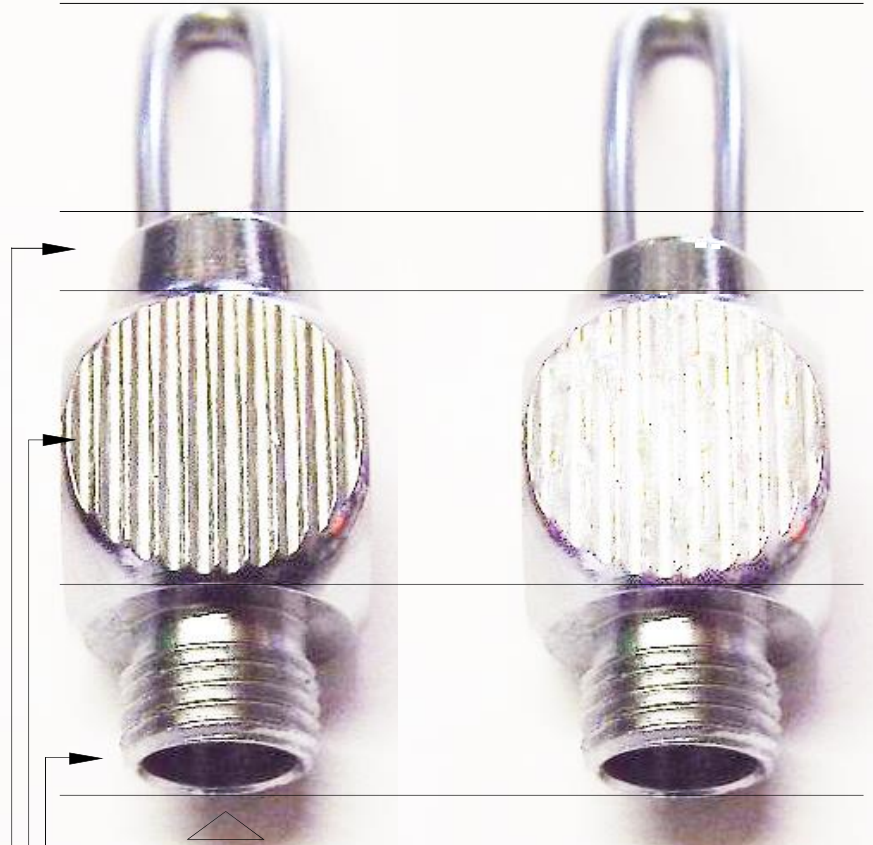
Åke's argument in favor of the lighter line guide...

In a cast only the weight of the lure pulls on the spool and make it spin. As the line guide moves back and forth with the rotation of the spool the weight of the line guide is critical to achieve good casting lengths when a light lure is used. A reel able to spin with less energy loss will cast longer...

Len thinks his remark about the weight of the Ambassadeur, which he found heavy, may have contributed when Åke decided to design a lightweight prototype. Åke's new prototype had several weight-saving features and the line guide was just one of them.

NEW

ÅKE 1952



Same diameter, material is thicker, nut has larger diameter.

Grooves on the front plate are much deeper and sharper

Height of cup is larger.

Diameter of top of cup is smaller.

Diameter of bottom of cup is smaller.

Top piece is shorter.


Weight is higher on the new part.

RECORD 5000 prototypes & pre-production reels




	Foot stamp «MADE IN SWEDEN» & Fishlogo	3 digit Foot number	Polished Brake Plate	Grey brake Plate	Grey spool	Grey Star Wheel	Series 1 components 1)	Series 2 components 1)	Series MOD SG components 1)	Roman numbers inside
 <p>Type 1 prototypes 1 red reel made in March 1951 (mock-up) 1 reel each colour made in May 1951 Hand engraved Ambassadeur logo Number is colour code, not serial number March reel has dark grey brake plate Fully functional except for March reel</p>	Yes	Yes 100 to 111	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

3 digit numbers are colour codes. It is hard to find the logic here, but fortunately Åke lists all numbers given to all reels and all colours. Note that the gold reel has both grey and gold starwheels.

 <p>Type 2 prototypes 20 reels each color made in October/November 1951 Machine engraved Ambassadeur logo Fully functional Displayed at St.Eriksmässan and showed to customers</p>	Yes	Yes 100 to 121	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
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Colour codes now distinguishes different shades of the same colour. Numbers also distinguish between different paint qualities and application procedures. Quite a few of these reels may have been destroyed by vigorous testing of paint quality.

 <p>Sales reels 100 red made last two weeks of August 1952</p> <p>MOD SG Made as of September 1952</p>	Yes	No 1 to 100	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
	No 3)	No 2 have # 122	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No 4)

1) Significant differences between the components makes it possible to distinguish between a type 1, type 2 prototype and later reels like the sales samples and the MOD SG.

2) No information on black sales samples, ABU may have made some, but most likely they did not.

3) Two MOD SG reels have Fishlogo and «MADE IN SWEDEN» stamp + 3 digit number stamp = 122 for both.

4) Use of Roman number codes started in last week of January 1953.

significant features

of colour test prototypes..



COLOURS:



GREEN RED BLACK

Handle in same colour as reel

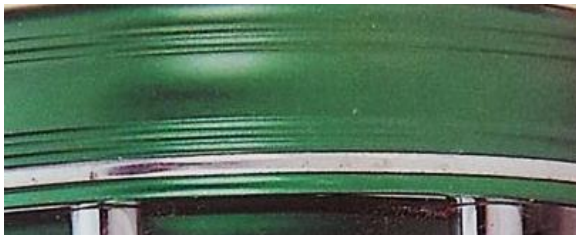


Left sideplate:
machine engravd REDORD FISH & Ambassadeur logo

stamped with

No. 5000
A:B. URFABRIKEN - SVÄNGSTA
SWEDEN

..but there is no MOD SG stamp



Polished Brake plate



Spool is grey arbour / grey flanges



Grey star wheel

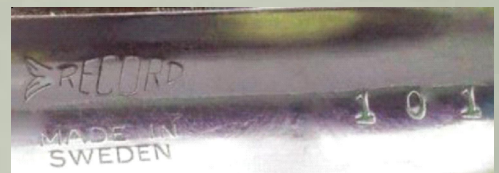
Central stamp -
Fish logo & MADE IN SWEDEN

3 digit number stamped into end of foot - #100 - # 122



Gold
prototype





ONE OFF.

According to Åke the gold and the blue prototypes made in May 1951 are one-offs. I have no clue as to what has become of the blue reel, the gold one was in Åke Murval's collection when I became its new owner. The reel remains in mint condition, is definitely never used and fully functional. It has all the hallmarks of an original, -polished brake plate, grey spool and star wheel (there is also a gold starwheel), no MOD SG stamp and no Roman numbers inside. Also the inside parts match all of the specifications of the early prototype reels.

Green prototype



Note:

The green colour test prototype is stamped N° 6000, but is in fact a model 5000 reel (see later page for more on this). This green colour test prototype is not the same reel as the «Murval last minute prototype» (which I will present in a later article or book) – it has all the hall marks of a true colour test prototype and it has no signs of use.

Black prototype



Note :


Both the black and green colour test prototypes from Åke's collection are stamped with N° 6000 instead of N° 5000. They are however 5000 models , se later page...



Red prototype



Variations of the red colour is considerable, some reels, and especially the early MOD SG reels are dark red, others come in a brighter shade of the red colour. The Roman numbering system was introduced in January 1953 to help match colours of the different parts. This colour test prototype is painted in a clear, strong red, not the darkest red I have seen and not the brightest, but something in between. There are no Roman numbrs inside this reel.



Why is the green and black colour test Record 5000 prototypes from Åke's collection stamped with N° 6000 instead of N° 5000? Truth is I don't know. There is no explanation in Åke's notes and all of the 20 green and the 20 black reels made in October/November 1951 are listed as Record 5000 models. No mention of a 6000 among these reels can be found...

puzzle...

The skilled observer will spot it at once, the curious fact that the green and the black colour test prototypes have mis-stamped side plates. They are Record 5000 reels, but the stamping says mod. No. 6000. So what happened here? I have no reason to think the plates were ever changed, the reels lay wrapped in oilpaper and show no sign of use. The colour is a perfect match to the colour of the frame. My guess is it's all due to a silly mistake when these reels were assembled, or shortage of the correct parts. ABU's management had asked for 20 reels in green, black and red, 60 in all, and we must remember that this took place in pre-production times. Manufacture of parts and assembly was probably hectic and to some extent unorganized. There was no production-line and whoever assembled the prototypes was left with what was at hand. If a couple of plates were mis-numbered, perhaps there was no way to correct this, or perhaps it was overlooked. Whatever, two reels, at least, carried the wrong number...

What this proves is that the Record 6000 stamping tool was at hand in October/November 1951 and that the 6000 model was a planned model from almost the start of the Ambassadeur design project. No big surprise here, the 6000 model is mentioned on several pages through Åke's notes, and two wide-spool prototypes were made very early in the project and tested for torsional strength and stability. The Record 6000 wasn't an afterthought...

The mistaken model stamping may be seen as a curiosity, but that's all this is. And I guess the number is the reason why Åke put these two reels aside. They weren't fit for public display and all he needed was colour samples of all the different colours they tested. We tend to think of these reels as what they are today, precious collector items with a high value, but back then, when these reels were made, they were nothing of the kind. We must remember they were prototypes; tools along the path of finalizing the design of what were to become the new Ambassadeur, and most of them were simply thrown away when they had served their purpose.

St. Eriksmässan Stockholm 1952



The final word on colour followed shortly after the St. Eriksmässan in Stockholm in August 1952. The visitors at the fair ground were in favor of the black reel, by a rather large margin, followed by the green (not the other way around as Lenny seems to remember), and the red reel only being the third choice of the public. Göte Borström, however, had a different opinion and in Åke's notes it becomes clear that the decision wasn't a democratic one, but the ruling of Göte alone. The new Ambassador would be red. Production started soon after this, in mid-September (parts) with the first reels being assembled in October.

One interesting observation is that the gold coloured reel does not figure in Åke's notes from the exhibition. We must assume it never contended the colour test at the St. Eriksmässan and that only the red, green and black reels were presented. This fits with the decision made in May when the gold coloured reel was rejected along with the blue variant, and in a statement printed by ABU in 2013 where Lennart Borgström also confirms he cannot remember if the gold coloured reel was exhibited.

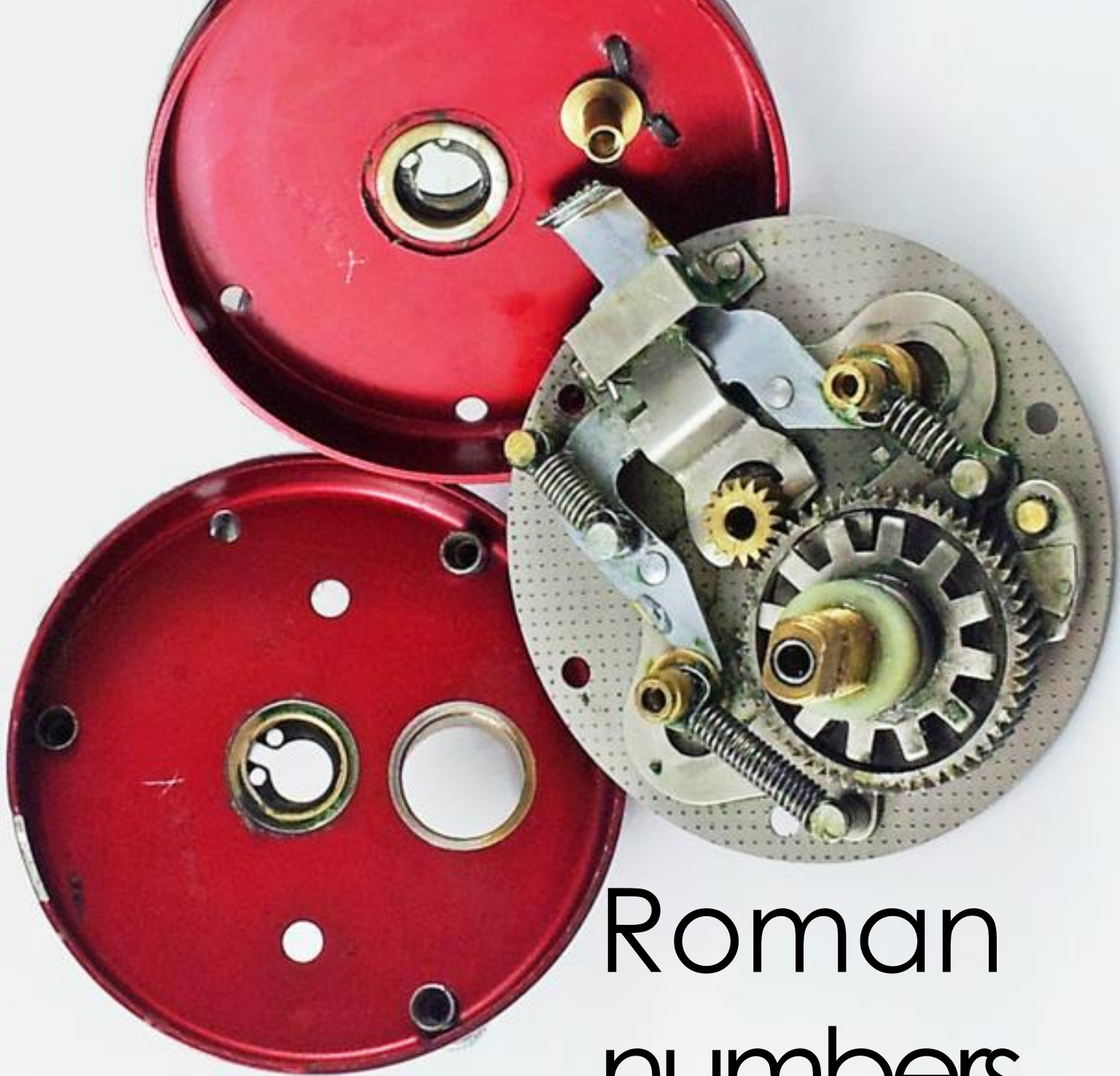
The St. Eriksmässan wasn't the only test ground for the colours of the new Ambassador, reels were also exhibited at AB Sport & Vapenmagasinet in Helsingborg, a shop ABU used to sell many of their samples. Åke makes a note of a visit to this shop and again the black reel is the favorite, but the green is also mentioned as popular. ABU's sellers also showed reels to selected customers across Sweden. No record of dealer opinions exists, but no matter what they may have said it seems it would not have changed the outcome.

From other notes it seems clear Åke himself favored the black reel and that opinions inside ABU differed a lot. Göte was the boss though, and able to execute his powers to have the colour debate end in his favor. Another observation from Åke's notes on the final production specifications is the use of «Göte's Specifications». Seems Åke wasn't happy with some of Göte's decisions and for a while relations between the two were tense. Len told me Åke felt Göte was taking too much of the credit, and this is to some extent reflected in Åke's notes. Surely this deserves a closer study and needs to be discussed in a larger format of a book.

As we know the red reel was more than just well accepted by the customers, it came to be the single most important reel in ABU's history and the reel which elevated ABU to an international volume supplier. Those who favored the green or the black reels had their turn of luck later as new models were introduced in black for the C-Ambassadors and green for the D-Ambassadors, but this of course didn't happen for another ten or more years. Through the 1950's red was the norm, except for the British market where Ambassador reels were black, or at least some of them were.



St Eriksmässan, first opened in 1943, was an international exposition in Stockholm. Today there is a new location and the name has now been changed to Stockholmsmässan. This picture is from 1952 and somewhere in there is the new Record Ambassador on its first public display...



Roman numbers..

Last serial number I have seen for a reel with Roman numbers inside is # 98562. This reel was manufactured before May 1958.



To ABU, colored reels and paint was a new thing and they found it difficult to control the anodizing process. Åke Murvall makes a note of this in his notebook and also describes the remedy. Roman numbers. This entry is made in the third week of January 1953 and it seems implementation took place immediately. This explains both why there were no Roman numbers on the inside of the early prototypes and why some MOD SG don't have Roman numbers and why some have them. The solution appears to be a painter's invention and Åke seems to go along with the proposal without argument. The implication of this is of course that if you have an early Record Ambassadeur MOD SG with Roman numbers inside, its earliest manufacturing date is the last week of January 1953. If there is no MOD SG designation, but Roman numbers inside, this reel is made after January 1954, and if the reel is a MOD SG without Roman numbers its likely to be a 1952 or January 1953 model.

early evolution



1952 MOD SG

Production starts in October and first reels are delivered to customers in December. Colours are generally a dark shade of red.. Roman numbers appear in January 1953.



1954

The MOD SG designation has disappeared. There are many transitional models, Grey star wheel & spool, grey spool arbor and red flanges and grey star wheel, or the same grey/red spool with red star wheel. It seems that specifications depended on which parts were available.



1954

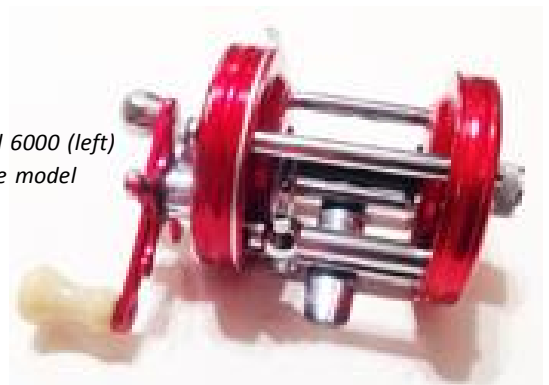
The Ambassador 5000 A is launched with extra spool capacity and single handle with counterweight.. Many fat spool 5000s have been retrofitted with the large capacity spool and these reels have the standard twin handle.

1954

The Record Ambassador 6000 is launched. This reel is a wider model which offers more line capacity, but is otherwise the same as the 5000. No foot number until 1964. First model for sale has the grooved handle showed here on one of Wayne's reels, the next has a longer handle. Spool and star wheel are grey, then follows the same alterations as seen on the 5000 model with red flanges red star wheel etc.



Wayne's grooved Record 6000 (left) and the extended handle model (right).



early evolution page 2

1956

The Ambassadeur is fitted with serial numbers. First number is # 50000 which was given as a gift to Åke Murval.



1956/58

Name changes from Record to ABU. A few reels are sold with no name at all and these are highly sought after among collectors. Numbers are between 60000 and 80550. Reels now have red star wheel and spool with red flanges.



1961

A special model appears with black spool. This is a rare variation and highly prized by many collectors. Numbers for this variant should be between 145000 and 200000.

Another rare spool is the black flanges/grey arbor variant for the Ambassadeur A model. According to researcher Fred Ribb known serial numbers are between 96601 and 107927.

Shipping records show reel # 96601 is shipped from the factory in May 1958, # 200000 was shipped in February 1962 and # 300000 on September 13, 1963.

Yet another rare spool variant is the bright aluminum arbour/black flanges model (like the one used for the 5000C model). I know too little about it to do more than just mention it, but it is clearly made for a non ball bearing model and will not fit a 5000C reel.



1964

Ambassadeur 5000 B is launched, the 4 screw model without clicker and old handle is scarce. In 1966 the B-model is equipped with clicker which becomes the signature feature of this model.



1967

The 3 screw model arrives with many changes and the era of the classic 5000 ends. Basically though, it is still the same reel and true to the Ambassadeur's original design.

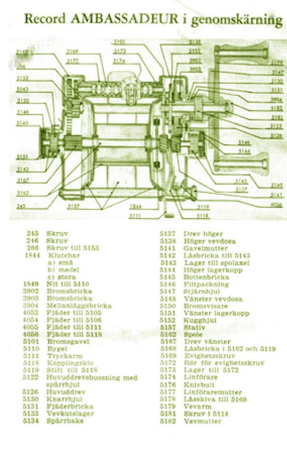


5000 MOD SG



This reel is one of the very first to leave the assembly line in 1952. There are no Roman numbers inside – correct for a MOD SG made before January 1953.

Åke's MOD SG is the only one of his reels which displays signs of use. It is still in very good shape, mechanically fully functional and with only minor scars from handling , ..it cannot have seen much use. Comes with the original box, leather case and the original papers in Swedish text only. Note the color, which is the typical very deep red which occurred on most of the early MOD SG's. This color is a darker red than the one found on the color test reel, evidence of the problems ABU had to control the anodizing process in the early days of colored reels. As we know, these problems led to the use of coding to match colors. This reel is stamped the same way as the prototypes with a three digit color number, but there is no fish logo or «made in Sweden» stamp. I see this reel as documentation of the final production specifications and refer to it as a type-2 prototype. One thing which has always puzzled me about the red color is it doesn't seem to fade. Red is a notoriously difficult color to keep from fading, but ABU's red seems to stay the same regardless of exposure to sunlight and the elements. Good work ABU!





Record Ambassadeur # 50000

*Note:
The dark spots on the
foot are dried grease,
not rust or signs of use.*

*First Ambassador 5000 reel to receive a serial number -
a gift to Åke Murval in appreciation of his work for ABU.
Comes with beautiful teak box, extra spool and extra handle.*





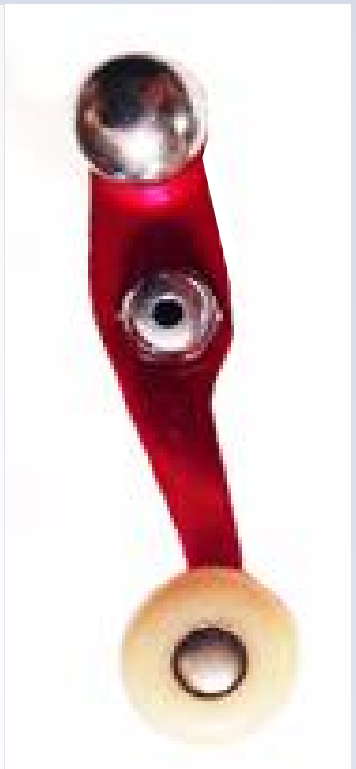
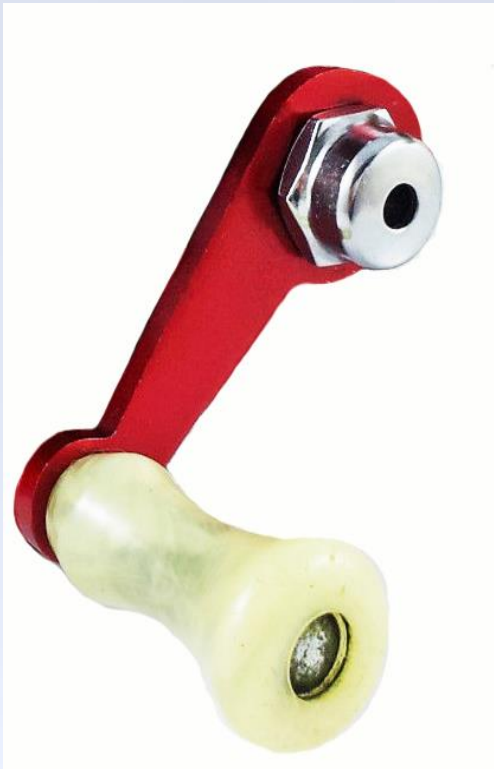
Record 6000

Anyone out there with a reel like this?
I sure would like to hear from you...



Record 6000 model was developed alongside the 5000 and there are references to it in Åke's notes in both the 1951 and in the 1952 and 1953 entries. The move from Record Ambassadeur 5000 to the 6000 model is simple and the practice of widening the spool to create a larger reel was well known to ABU. When Swedish and Norwegian coastal fishers complained about the line capacity of the 5000 ABU was quick to respond. The first Record Ambassadeur 6000 appeared in 1954 with a short single handle without counterweight. Even before the reel entered production, a new handle with counterweight was introduced. This is called the «grooved» model. The handle was too short to put enough distance between the handle nut and the counterweight to allow a tool to be inserted between the two, as a result part of the counterweight was cut off and thus the name. The grooved model was phased out with the arrival of a model with a stretched handle, but ABU exhausted their stock of the short grooved handle before the change became permanent. This transition period lasted for at least a couple of years.

To find a reel fitted with the first handle without counterweight is probably next to impossible these days. I have never seen another one, nor have I met anyone else who has seen one. The only known appearance is in very early marketing papers where a drawing of the 6000 without counterweight was used (see above). Daniel Skupien also has one photo of a reel to this specification in his book. The reel in Åke's collection is in excellent condition and has probably never been used.



Type 1 - Type 2 & Type 3 Record Ambassador 6000 handle.



epilogue

«ABU led the world down the path of technical excellence and innovative solutions to solve the problems that casting reels were plagued with. Åke Muval led the world out of this wilderness and without him, who knows if we would have had the fine stable of reels we now take for granted, but should always revere. All to follow with casting reel design , will be in his shadow.. The content of this article goes to the source, how lucky we are to have these «real time» recordings of events to base our knowledge on.»

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