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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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NEXT MEETING – FLY TYING WITH THE MASTERS
AT THE KELVIN CLUB, 8:00 PM, THURSDAY APRIL 14, 2011

March Meeting – Christmas Island with Rick Dobson

(At the March meeting Rick Dobson described his experiences fishing for Bonefish on Christmas Island. The following is a summary of his talk).

The Island:

I hasten to add that the ‘Christmas Island’ I visit to fish is not the same Christmas Island written up in the news for hosting refugees and ‘boat people’. The Christmas Island I am referring to (incorrectly!) should really be called Kiribati. It was discovered by Captain Cook on Christmas eve in 1799; hence became known locally as ‘Christmas Island’. It is in the Pacific Ocean, four hours north of Fiji and four hours south of Honolulu. It is the world’s largest coral atoll, being basically 200 square miles of Bonefishing flats. The highest points on the island are the tops of the coconut trees. It is very flat and barely above sea level. But the fishing is absolutely exceptional.



Rick in full flight

In World War II it was very strategically placed in the Pacific, so was taken over by US and British forces, who built an airstrip out of coral. That airstrip is still there today. In the early 1950s it was used briefly for atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, and then a few years later someone decided it would be a good place for growing coconut trees for the copra. Today this is the only industry on the island other than a small saltworks.

The locals are wonderful people. There are about 2,000 permanent residents, and they are a happy and friendly people who would do anything for you.

There is only one establishment of note there - the Captain Cook Hotel, which was originally the officers’ quarters during the war. Christmas Island is a third world environment, so times are very relaxed and life on the island is fairly simple.

Getting to Christmas Island

Our first trip there was in 2004. We flew to Honolulu, then hired a charter plane to get us to Christmas Island. It cost us \$7,800. These days you can do it for under \$4000, and that’s very good value. About four years ago a flight was established from Fiji to Honolulu, and Christmas Island was a very convenient mid-point stopover. So all the fishermen jump off there, and hop back on the same plane a week later.

These days we fly from Melbourne to Fiji in about four hours and the flight to Christmas Island is another four hours. Our trips are arranged through Frontier Travels, an American firm specializing in travel to exotic fishing locations. We book through Angling Adventures, based in Geelong, and they work with Frontiers Travel. We now fly direct Melbourne to Fiji and spend the day there relaxing and taking it easy, and then catch the midnight flight to Christmas Island, arriving at 6 am local time, feeling refreshed and ready to start fishing

straight away. And believe me, Christmas Island is simply the most extraordinary fishing venue with huge areas of flats everywhere.

The accommodation there is basic but adequate, consisting mainly of bungalows on the beach. There is no hot water and the taps often don't work, but then you can't drink the local water anyway. The beds are comfortable and, anyway, when you get back from a day's fishing you are so knackered you would happily sleep anywhere. You can hear the surf crashing on the beach at night, and if you get back early from a day's fishing you can fish right in front of the bungalows if the tide is low.

Can you eat Bonefish? No. While the locals eat them they are full of bones and we find them inedible. On the other hand if you go out offshore a whole range of other species is available to you, including Wahoo, Yellowfin Tuna, Marlin, and Sailfish. If you catch, for example, a Wahoo, it will be brought back to the hotel and the next day you'll have fresh Wahoo on the menu. On the second day you'll get Battered Wahoo. On the third day it's Stewed Wahoo, and on the fourth day ... well, just avoid it.

While you are there you need to drink bottled water as the local water causes severe stomach upsets. You even need to clean your teeth in the bottled water. The food is not of great quality, but there is plenty of it and it is adequate. Lunches are the same everyday – sandwiches made of white bread (full of sugar) filled with cheese, meat, and onion. You may also score an apple or orange. A day on the flats also requires two bottles of drinking water, because you get very thirsty.

A typical day begins at 5:30 in the morning, with breakfast at 6 am (pancakes and bacon and eggs). At 6:45 you head out to the trucks to be taken to your location for the day, which may be 15 minutes, or 30 minutes or an hour's drive away. And the trucks have no suspension.

The Boats

The local boats are 30 - 40 foot long canoes with outriggers, all lashed together with ropes. They are equipped with 40 horsepower outboard motors, which normally work provided the spark plugs are okay. These are also used to take four anglers and two guides out for the day.

The Fish

Bonefish were discovered on the island about 25 years ago. Initially there were only small Bonefish there, and the fishing wasn't highly regarded. But then the government realised that there was money to be made in promoting this Bonefishing, and the fish needed to be larger to attract overseas anglers. So now a team of Rangers ensures that size limits are adhered to, and that no-one is poaching or netting the fish. Penalties are severe - those caught infringing the rules are fined heavily and spend time in the local calaboose. This has meant that over the years both the average size and the numbers of Bonefish have increased substantially, and these days 5 and 6 lb fish are common.

Bonefish are a tough and muscular fish, and when hooked they go like fury. One angler found his entire flyline peeled from his reel in about 4 seconds.

My rod has white markings along the butt section. There is a mark at 17 inches, another at 18 inches, and so on. These marks enable me to quickly measure my fish, and get an estimate of their weight. A 17 inch Bonefish is typically about 2 lb, and an 18 inch fish is typically 2 lb 6

oz, and so on. When I catch a fish I use a stainless steel hook disgorging to remove the hook, because I don't like handling the fish and thus removing their protective coating. The disgorging works because our flies are all tied on barbless hooks. Occasionally a Bonefish will swallow the hook deeply, but in most cases they are hooked in the corner of the mouth.

While Bonefish are the main target, there are also plenty of other species there as well, including GTs. If you are silly enough to cast to one of these with your 12 lb tippet, then you are going to lose a fair bit of stuff. And you will also spend a lot of time playing one of these GTs when you could be catching Bonefish instead. While you are playing it you'll likely see a school of Bonefish swim past and you'll be wondering whether you should continue battling the GT, or just break off and chase the Bonefish instead.

The Gear

It's wise to invest in the biggest and best wide arbor reel that you can afford, because you need the reel to run smoothly on those fast runs the Bonefish make. We use 7 or 8 weight rods and floating lines because we are fishing over shallow water all the time. Often the water is only ankle to knee deep. We use tropical floating lines and the new sharkskin lines are very hard to beat.

So the gear is straightforward and very similar to trout fishing gear. The old days of 9 and 10 weight rods are gone, and 6 weight rods are a little too light because you have to contend with the wind, which blows constantly at about 20 knots. Calm days are rare, and you don't want them anyway. The wind is your friend, and it provides a pleasant cooling breeze.

People say Bonefish are hard to see, and they can be at times too, but at other times are dead easy. How many shots do you get? On a good day you may cast to 300 fish, and on a bad day maybe only 80 fish, so you get lots of chances. (On how many trout fishing days do you get to cast to 300 fish?) When the light is bad the best tactic is to simply find shallower water. The best colours for polaroids are brown or yellow or amber. Grey is next to useless. I take a pair of yellow-green polaroids, as the yellow accentuates the dark bands on the backs of the Bonefish and makes them easier to spot.

We also use finger stalls to prevent line burn from the fast moving lines. Hats – the Arafat or 'terrorist' or legionnaire type hats are best. It is important to keep your eyes shaded from the sun so that the pupils open up, letting more light in so that you can see better. It is also important to keep cleaning your polaroids, as they are constantly being smeared by the salt spray.

Leaders are 12 lb fluorocarbon, because Bonefish aren't leader shy, but the fly must be attached using a loop knot. Flies? Bonefish eat shrimps and worms and crabs. We use Crazy Charlies nearly all the time. There are shrimps in the water there called Manta shrimps, with lots of orange in them, so the Crazy Charlie with its orange head is a good imitation. The weight of the fly is critical – more critical than the pattern, so you need to carry flies in a variety of weights. Bonefish move at 3 to 4 mph when they are feeding, and move about 12 feet in one direction before they veer or change direction. If your fly is too light or the water too deep or the current too strong then your fly simply won't be in the right place. When you cast your fly you want it to sink to the bottom in the time it takes to count to '3'.

Sometimes all you see is a black dot moving along, this being the eye of the bonefish. They eat by hovering up material off the bottom, so they feed into the current because otherwise the



disturbed sand blocks their view. So it is vital to have the cast, the fly weight, the leader, the wind and the current all working correctly to get your fly in the right spot ahead of the feeding fish. Bonefish must see the fly move a way from them, as a fly moving towards them will spook them and they flee. So wind and fly weight and current direction are all critical.

Fishing the Flats

When the tide comes in there is a 3 three hour gap between the tide at the entrance and the tide further back in the flats. Bonefishing is all about making the most of the tides. If you have a boat you can use it to follow the incoming tide, so you have the best of the tide all the way back.

There are lots of places to fish. I have been there many times and I walk a lot whilst fishing and yet haven't fished many places more than twice, because there is simply so much new water to explore. Most of the time you're fishing by yourself and rarely see another angler. There are miles of flats there and you can walk to your heart's content. But you must have the right footwear to keep the coral and the rocks out. The staghorn coral will cut your ankles if they have no protection, so you need comfortable boots with long neoprene socks and gaiters over the socks. Stonefish are also around on the flats, so again hard-soled boots are vital. (And sharks come around too on occasions and can be alarming!)

The wind is your friend. Clear flat water makes the Bonefish hard to see and in these conditions they become particularly spooky. So the wind is an asset. The average temperature during a day will be 24°C to 26°C and invariably there is a cooling wind. Sunburn and windburn are problems and you need to use lots of sunblock and lip protection. The Arafat-type hat is very good here, offering lots of protection.

The tides are of vital importance as you need to fish the incoming tide. Ideally you want the start of the incoming tide at 6:30 or 7:00 am on the first day of your trip, as the tides are later each successive day. So you need to choose your week's holiday carefully to coincide with the best tides.

Guides

Should you use a guide or fish by yourself? This is up to you. Usually two anglers share a guide. Some people never use a guide, while others do all their fishing with a guide. Guides will quickly assess a flat and if it's no good will take you to better areas where there are more fish. Their ability to see fish is beyond belief – they are very very good, so you need to trust them and use them. They earn \$10 per day per angler so they get paid \$20 per day, which is very good money for the locals on Christmas Island.

So there it is – Christmas Island – simply the best Bonefishing location in the world. Make a point of getting there.

President's Message

The season, for me, is nearly over. I am taking my other half on a much-needed holiday. At least for her. However I did get some late mail about fly-fishing in Tuscany, and more specifically the town where we will be staying for ten days. Mick Hall was there recently to attend a world fly-fishing exhibition. So I may have fallen on my feet this time, and am hoping to send a report from the local club for the May newsletter.



Last week I drove up to Thornton and was disappointed to see so much growth in blackberries and other scrub along the Goulburn, especially after the work that has been undertaken in recent years. On the other hand, the smaller streams such as the Rubicon and Steavenson have been cleaned out by a good rush of water and were looking brilliant. Next season promises to be a fantastic one for my favourite way of fishing.

There are a couple of issues that the VFFA may need to re-visit. We need to review and possibly re-establish our stocking program. Perhaps we should also seek ways of getting involved with the relevant authorities to try to improve streamside habitat and vegetation. It seems at times that too many projects are being started and not enough is being done on on-going maintenance. The ATF (Australian Trout Foundation) has been very successful in getting Government departments to spend our licence fees on improving our trout fishery, and they need to be commended for this. We, along with all trout fishers, must support them in the work they do. They occasionally need volunteer labour to do various small tasks, but the easiest and best way to show our support is to join and pay our membership subscription.

The calendar has some significant speakers in the next few months, with Geoff Hall in May talking about the threat of the exploding Carp populations. Then in June we have Rod Barford, President of the ATF, giving his insights and updating us on ATF matters. In July we are looking forward to another VFFA Auction, with around 100 to 110 items going under the hammer, which will again be wielded by the awesome Marty Rogers. So when you see the request for tackle you want to sell at the auction, be quick or miss out.

Our best wishes go to John Sommerville and John Philbrick at this time. Get well soon, and we look forward to seeing you back in action next season.

When I get back in May I will be planning the next New Zealand trip, so if you wish to go, email me to book a place. I am planning a week at Athol and then (for those who want to stay on) a week at Nokomai Station.

The website Forum has experienced some spamming activity with unwanted advertising being uploaded. As a result it is now offline for a while until it gets cleaned up. The rest of the website is constantly being updated, so if you haven't logged in for a while please do so. Any member who has not registered online should do so. The VFFA Council is using your subs to produce the newsletter and run the website for the benefit of members. Please make use of these valuable resources.

My thanks to the members that made the Tasmanian trip such a success. In particular, Hamish Hughes for his organization and Hugh Maltby for his enthusiasm and major dinner event arranging (and cooking ability).

Tight lines,
Rick Dugina.

April Meeting: Fly Tying with the Masters

(Please note: the April meeting is on **THURSDAY APRIL 14** – a week earlier than normal because of the Easter break)

The April meeting will be an evening of fly tying, with expert demonstrators Hubert Reichelt, Peter Campbell, Andrew Mossman and Bernard Holbery. We have seen Hubert, Peter and Andrew in action on previous occasions, but this is Bernard's debut. But be assured, he is now tying professionally and comes with very high recommendations for his tying talents.

Members are reminded that they don't have to spend all night watching others tying flies. President Rick Dugina has issued an invitation to all fly tying members to bring their tools and materials along to tie up some of their favourite flies for other members. "A picture is worth a thousand words, so a demonstration must be worth ten thousand." So members with a favourite fly they would like to share are most welcome to bring their vises (fly tying!) along with them.

These evenings are very relaxed and convivial occasions providing ample opportunity for members to find out about new flies and new fly tying skills and techniques. Please join us for what will undoubtedly be a thoroughly entertaining and instructive time.

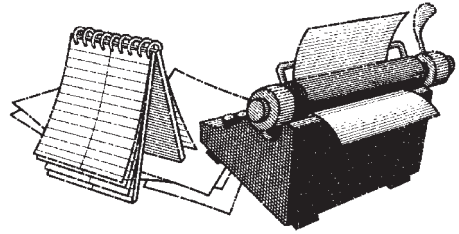
Advance Notice - May Meeting: Guest Speaker Geoff Hall

Geoff has been a full-time guide with, and director of, the Goulburn Valley Fly-Fishing Centre for 19½ years. He is also the Victorian representative on the Professional Fishing Instructors and Guides Association (PFIGA). He was, for three years, a member of the Fisheries Co-Management Council - an advisory body to the government on fisheries issues. He was on the Council of VRFish for a number of years, and was president of the Australian Trout Foundation for one year. He has a thorough and comprehensive knowledge of all aspects of Victoria's trout fishery.

Geoff's presentation will be in two halves. He is keen to alert us to the imminent danger to our trout fishery due to the rapidly spreading carp menace. As far as he is concerned, it's 'the elephant in the room' and is a very serious threat. Geoff wants to discuss ways of tackling the problem and, as he sees it, the VFFA is a formidable fishing body in the state with sufficient influence and power to initiate measures to tackle the carp problem.

On a lighter note, in the second half of his talk Geoff is going to show a DVD of his latest trip to New Zealand, which includes lots of pictures of large trout rising to flies. He assures us that his DVD is extremely entertaining and well worth seeing.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



David Scholes has a lot to answer for. As 15-year-old I discovered a new book on the shelves in my school library – Scholes' *The Way Of An Angler*. I read it from cover to cover, was completely captivated, and I decided there and then that I had to get into this fly-fishing caper. Another 15 year were to pass before I finally got all the bits and pieces together, but once I started, the surf rods and spinning reels were offloaded; I was a committed fly-fisher. Interestingly, in the last couple of weeks I've met two other anglers with the same confession – they became fly-fishers through reading the books of David Scholes. He was a prolific writer, and wrote or co-authored several books and countless magazine articles. Late in his life he wrote a series of articles for FlyLife magazine, but when he died some of these remained unpublished. However Andrew Braithwaite managed to acquire them, and has kindly provided us with the very last article written by one of Australia's best known and loved fishing writers. It's vintage Scholes. I hope you enjoy it.

And talking of contributions and contributors, we will soon be publishing some articles by Jeremy Lucas. 'Jeremy who?' I can hear a few asking. Jeremy is a former research scientist living in Cumbria in the UK. He is now a professional fishing guide, author, and contributor to a number of British and European fly-fishing magazines. For many years he was a member of the England Fly Fishing Team competing in the various World, British and European Championships, and the list of prizes, trophies, medals and first-places that he won is exceedingly long. As a competition fly-fisher, Jeremy Lucas was one of the very best. His connection with Australian fly-fishing is that he is now the official coach and mentor of the Australian Fly-Fishing Team, captained by VFFA member Peter Dixon. Several weeks ago I emailed Jeremy seeking permission to reprint an article of his published in a British magazine. He immediately emailed me back, giving his permission, and also promised to write some articles specifically for our VFFA newsletter. Now how good is that! So next month he will give an account of his involvement with the Australian team at the last World Championships. For the following issue he has provided a fascinating article on 'French Nymphing', a technique described by Craig Coltman in the latest *FlyFisher* magazine (edited by Philip Weigall). This technique is a recent trend in competition fly-fishing, and apparently is extremely effective.

While most of the content for our newsletter comes from our own members, it is always interesting and instructive to read material by anglers from other countries and fishing environments. I know that members will enjoy Jeremy's contributions, and I'm sure you will also enjoy the article in this issue by Harry Robertson. Harry is an American Travel Consultant who specializes in organizing fishing trips to exotic locations. He is a close friend of Paul Squires, and in response to Paul's gentle promptings, has provided a fabulous account of his recent exploits in South America.

Finally, it is very pleasing to report that John Philbrick has come through his first hip replacement surgery in good spirits and is now recovering well. We wish him all the best for a

rapid recovery. Look out fish – John is adamant he'll be on the rivers again later this year!
Best wishes John from us all.

Lyndon Webb

VFFA Meetings & Activities

APRIL 2011

14 **General Meeting: Fly Tying Night**
27 Council Meeting
April 29 – May 1 Big River - Enoch's Point Trip

MAY 2011

19 **General Meeting: Guest speaker – Geoff Hall**
May 21 - 22 End of Season Goulburn Trip
25 Council Meeting

JUNE 2011

5 Sunday Casting commences
9 Dinner With Partners
12 Sunday Casting
16 **General Meeting: Guest Speaker – Rod Barford**
18 Cane Making Day
19 Cane Day
22 Council Meeting
26 Sunday Casting

JULY 2011

3 Sunday Casting
10 Sunday Casting
17 Sunday Casting
21 **General Meeting: Auction**
23 Warrnambool FF Club Game Dinner
24 Sunday Casting
27 Council Meeting
31 Sunday Casting

Dinner With Partners

This is an early notice to inform members that the annual *Dinner With Partners* will be held again this year at the Kelvin Club, on Thursday June 9, 2011, commencing at 7:00 pm.

Details of costs and the menu will be given in the next newsletter.

David Scholes' Final Article

(This is the last article written by David Scholes. It was written for FlyLife magazine, but when David passed away it wasn't published. However Andrew Braithwaite had the file and has very kindly passed it on for us to enjoy.)

Between the time of Dame Juliana Berner's Treatyse and the much later writings of Izaak Walton, the essence of the few angling books written was purely practical – how to catch the greatest number of fish in the shortest possible time. For 157 years anglers had departed from the Dame's philosophy and had become pot-hunters. Her dainty stream fishing sport, which she compassionately promoted as especially good for your soul and the goodness of your spirit with the merriment of catching some fish, also took two decades to take root and more still before it was as Wordsworth termed it "The contemplative man's recreation", when fly-fishing came of age to be taken up with all its special delights.

Yet, unfortunately here in Australia today, the kill incentive still exceeds that of skill. Numeracy is an important part in the average angler's catch. On returning home the first question he's asked is: "How many did you catch?" And the second is: "How big were they?" And the third is: "How big was the biggest?" Pot-hunters pure and simple!

I once knew a young farmer who liked nothing better than to steal a few hours in the nearby creek, wading the stream up to his knees and using either floating worms or grasshoppers. Once by chance we met and he watched me cast my fly with pure amazement; he watched as I was able to cast the weightless artificial so far with such accuracy. The seed was sown, and instead of the day being counted by numbers, sometimes ten little fish, sometimes twenty and occasionally thirty – instead it was now much more on Dame Juliana's terms. We met on several occasions after that, each time his pleasure increasing, and he began to be less and less a numbers fisherman. It wasn't long before he became interested in the creatures to which the trout rose, taking the artificial fly so gently from the surface, and soon this interest expanded to learning how these flies were made and who made them.

And here began a new chapter in his fishing life, because I quickly introduced him to Noel Jetson, one of the best fly tiers Tasmania has ever known. Noel joined us enthusiastically on some of our outings and soon had my farmer friend well and truly hooked to fly-fishing. His first fish caught on the fly was greeted with boundless enthusiasm as might be expected, the fish being taken from one of Noel's prettiest little rippling runs on a lovely lowland stream.

Noel frequently took him out and introduced him to some of the delightful little creeks that he loved so much. Together Noel and I fished some of these little streams and found unbounded joy in their special charms and closeness to nature. Did you ever, for instance, have a Fantail land on your rod while you were holding it out over a pool? Or watch a Skylark rise vertically all the way up into the sky, singing all the way, then close its wings and dive in silence to the ground?

And so time marched on as it inevitably does, and Noel and my farming friend became the closest of companions. He was much older than we were and he slowly lost his hearing. Next went his ability to walk steadily over rough ground. Then his sight failed to a large degree. Finally, there was a loss of memory and we knew that our dear friend was failing. Inevitably,

the unhappy day came when he made his last cast, and sadly Noel and I sprinkled his ashes into the exact same pool from which he had caught his first trout. So ends a gentle little story about a moderate pot-hunter who converted to become a dedicated fly-fisher.

But, now that fly-fishing has been accepted as just another sport like football and cricket, a new player has been introduced to the game. Teams are being organized and coaches arranged with doubtless the dollar coming into it. Where has the loveliness of fly-fishing gone to? Has the Catherine Wheel not begun to turn? Where can it all be stopped?

I fished a small lake in Wales where the restrictions were so severe that they turned fishing into an art. One fly and one rod were allowed, no landing nets permitted, one paddle to each boat and only one trout could be kept. Fishing was permitted from dawn to dusk precisely. On that day my daughter rowed me around the lake like a Red Indian, and when a trout was caught, it was landed by cutting a hole in a plastic bag. One wonders if similar restrictions could be organized on Tasmanian waters. God forbid!

Me? Oh yes! I have had my days as a pot-hunter. Many years ago on the North Esk River fishing with Fred Stewart, we had nineteen trout between us. Both of us were easily in reach of our bag limit of twelve fish, when suddenly in his quiet Scottish brogue he called across the river to me, "If ye don't mind David I have had enough", and from that day on Fred's words ring in my ears every time I go out. But I must confess that in those early years, my aim was always to catch as many fish as I could in the shortest possible time, whether it be a stream or a lake – in fact everywhere I went.

My worst pot-hunting performances took place at Lake King William in the 1960's, when the population of isopod crustaceans – *phreatoicids* to be precise – were literally in thousands along the shorelines. Reg Clayton and I spent many days and sometimes weekends committing nothing short of murder on the trout, which were easily caught on a well sunken wet fly. I estimate the average weight of the fish at about one and a half pound. The shameful result of a weekend's fishing was one hundred and four trout - which I have on movies! My good friend Fred Stewart could hardly believe his ears, so over he came from Melbourne to join the fun. And I have him on movies too, playing a fish with Mount King William in the background. One of the troubles with catching all these fish was bagging them up after getting home to give them around to our friends.

Numbers of 'guru' guides have grown up like mushrooms, charging extravagant rates for a day's outing. Many could do much better by reading Rob Sloane's book, *Fly Fishing Fundamentals*, about the elements of fly-fishing. The key to fly-fishing is experience, and experience leads to skill. Watching a skilled angler in action is an education. His approach is like that of a panther, as he eyes off the fish already seen on its rise. Kneeling on one knee, he gauges just where his fly must land and at the right moment, with one back cast, he drops the fly exactly in the right spot, executes the strike precisely and plays the fish, probably still kneeling. Certainly none of this comically holding the rod above one's head like a wireless mast and reeling like mad!

Some of these 'guru' guides almost guarantee you a trout the first day, making the whole affair like a business trip with meals and booze supplied. Where have we got to? And what next?

I have only known one skilled angler - and I mean skilled. His experience has been vast and this in turn has led to his superb ability. Who, you might ask? Noel Jetson is the man. So, out with the dictionary and turn up the word 'skill' and study it thoroughly.

(The End)

Report from Longford ...

(Ray Brown has provided the following roundup on this last season in Tasmania)

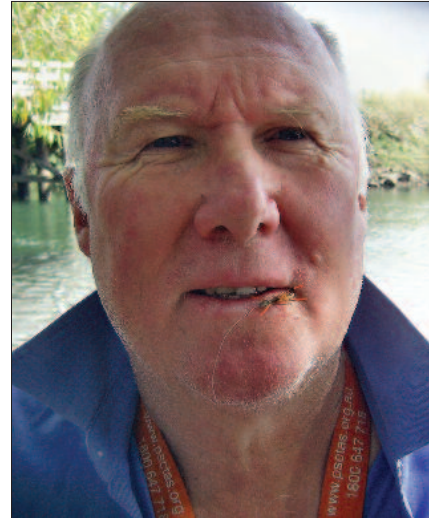
Last week I was talking to a friend who had moved to Tasmania to retire. In the 80's we had both fished a location on the far West Coast of South Australia called the Dog Fence. At low tide the reef was exposed, and at its outer edge it just dropped into 30 feet of water. As the tide came in the salmon followed the pilchards up over the reef into knee-deep water. We fly-fished for the salmon. The only problem was it was an all night drive, plus some, to get there from Adelaide, and the salmon were not always present.

This past season has been similar. Some days the fishing has been spectacular, while on others not worth the trouble. I found very little hopper fishing this season. Lately they have been taking hoppers, but you couldn't say they were on them. In recent weeks Arthurs, Woods, and Four Springs have had dun hatches and the fishing has improved, but generally it has been slow. Likewise on the streams for most of the season, at least till late January when the northern watersheds experienced high water and unseasonable conditions. The fishing was slow until mid-February, then the weather warmed up and the fish became more active. I will cover the streams I have fished since January 2011.

The Liffey River has been sensational in the last couple of months. Sessions in excess of the 12 fish bag were common. The water was crystal clear and once it had settled down to a comfortable level the fishing improved markedly. All the areas above Liffey are fishing well. Tags, Adams and small Beetle patterns seem to work the best. No big fish, but those you catch are scrappy little half-pounders.

I have rarely been out west this season. Early on I went for a walk into the Christy's Chain and managed five fish a day over four days, mainly on a stick caddis fished under a dry fly with the dry being rarely taken. The best fish was around 5 lb on the old scale. In January I fished Talihah, Sandy, Christy's Lagoon and Ada Lagoon, Agnes and a lake I call Pencil Pine. None unsuccessfully, but fish were all hard to come by, with duns and stick caddis fooling most of the takers.

Normally I fish the North-East rivers, but again high water and the lack of hoppers made them a more difficult proposition. Elk hair caddis or a CDC caddis accounted for most of the fish. I found a small feeder creek to the St Patrick's that had some nice fish in it - browns up to 2 lb, all on hoppers. One afternoon I managed eight nice fish, all better that you would get in the main stream. I also fished the Dorset, New, Ringarooma and Legerwood Rivers, all with mixed success. Most days you would achieve your bag, but was it never easy. High water and lack of hoppers was the reason, and easy fish were scarce. I saw a few nice fish in the Dorset River and caught one about 2 lb in the bridge pool when fishing with a couple of SAFFA mates.



Testing flies for taste is an important prerequisite for many successful patterns. You just have to know when not to swallow!"



Ray fishing the South Esk

They fished upstream of the bridge for about 10 fish in an hour.

Both the Mersey and Meander fished well this autumn when we had some good black spinner falls. Dun hatches occurred early morning, and then around midday the spinner falls began and the fish went on the feed. There were some good fish amongst them. Towards evening they switched to caddis, and most warm calm evenings were active well into the twilight. I fished a Movie Star through some of the middle reaches of the Meander in the ripples and had excellent results. On one trip to the Upper Mersey I was rewarded with a couple of fairly decent rainbows. These were in a deep strong gutter below a rapid. Both came to a Choco's Stimulator. Generally the fishing in both these watersheds was below par. They both had huge floods. Sound familiar?

I fished the South Esk mainly in the middle reaches between Avoca and Fingal. I had some great days in the January to March period. There was a bit of hopper fishing, but after the frosts and the last minor flood, the fish focused most on duns and the massive spinner falls. One afternoon out there fishing with Greenwell's Club member Les Hawkins, I managed a dozen and a half fish on a size 16 black spinner without moving more than 20 metres up the pool. On other days they were up on the duns, providing really superb fly-fishing.

The South Esk is the most underrated river system in Tasmania. (Someone told me that the owner of a large property just upstream of Fingal is no longer allowing fishermen access to fish on his property). It's best to keep away from the sandy reaches and those huge pools that are the size of small lakes. Fishing in the riffles above these pools will always bring good fish. My best fish on the Esk this season was around 3 lb, but a friend had one over 4 lb this season.

I only fished the Macquarie River around Woolmers Bridge. The fishing has been OK but nothing special. The water levels have been high, but the fish have been active on the caddis in the evenings. Elk hair caddis and Choco's Stimulator accounted for most of the fish. Few fish were away from the edges. It was not the best of seasons; in fact it was the worst I have had since moving to Tasmania. All seems promising for next season though, as we have had very good rainfalls. The rivers have flooded numerous times and have been cleared of debris and silt.

I hardly fished some of my favourite streams because of the high water conditions, and also because I decided last year to have a better look at the Mersey and South Esk systems. However I didn't fish the Mersey system as much as I would have liked, as it was in flood for half the season.

The South Esk is a different proposition. It's a 252 km long trout stream with all the classic meadow stream characteristics: riffles, runs, glides and pools interspersed with undercuts and banks that just shout 'hopper feeders'. I still managed some decent hopper fishing, but the hoppers were scarce and we had many short rises to our patterns. In fact a highland dun pattern caught far more fish, as did a black spinner. Next season I will have a look at the other 230 km of the Esk – that should take me a while. Hopefully by then the North-East rivers' flood levels will have receded. As I write this the second largest flood on record at Longford is receding. The fishing in the South Esk is finished for the season. The browns are already paired up ready to spawn. I fished a small upland North-Eastern river this week and caught many, many browns on a hopper. Then off to Four Springs Lake for a wonderful day on the duns, with one of the browns being close to five lb.

Now a winter of tying flies awaits me.

Tight lines, *Ray Brown*

Latrobe Valley Subscriptions

Members will recall that a few years ago the Latrobe Valley Fly-Fishers invited VFFA members to take up an Associate membership of the Latrobe Valley Club. The Latrobe Valley members have access to a large number of dams in the Thorpdale area and many of these have been stocked with trout, providing some excellent stillwater fishing within a reasonable travelling distance from Melbourne.

A number of members took up this offer and became Associate Members of the LVFF Club. A note from their treasurer reminds us that subscriptions are now due, and those keen to continue their membership are asked to pay a very modest \$50 (nearly all of which will be used to purchase fingerlings and yearlings to maintain the fish stocks in the dams).

The treasurer, Darrel Brew, suggests that a quick and simple way to pay subscriptions is by electronic transfer, which avoids bank charges. Please provide your name on the transaction for proof of payment and to receive a receipt.

Account Name: **Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers**

BSB: **013 745**

Account No: **259082009**

Conversely a cheque payable to Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers could be posted to Darrel, whose address is Mr D. Brew, Treasurer, Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers, 2 Urbahnf Crescent, Morwell, 3840

Patagonia: From Quillen To Calafate

(Harry Robertson fishes South America)

I had heard the stories of the giant rainbow trout that inhabited Lake Strobel (Jurassic Lake), where Laguna Verde Lodge is located. So I decided to make this year's South American trip into a two-part affair. I would visit a group I had organised to float and fly-fish the legendary rivers of Nequen Province of Argentina, and then continue on to Lake Strobel to fish and assess the fishery as a location for future hosted group travel. So I called Gene Koechler from Los Angeles, California, and asked if he would trust my judgment once again on an adventure. I first met Gene while fishing the lagoons of Costa Rica, and we have travelled and fished together worldwide many times since. He agreed to the new itinerary of the two locations, so we met in Buenos Aires for an overnight, and the next day took the earliest flight to the town of Bariloche, where we were met by my close friend Martin Freedman. I had met Martin years before when he was guiding for an outfitter. He has now graduated to owning his own company, Outfitters Patagonia, receiving and entertaining my clients with flawless professionalism year after year.

We enjoyed a tasty lunch at a Parilla, and then were on our way to the crossroads location of Quillen in Nequen Province. A three-hour journey took us through the lovely countryside around the shore of a massive reservoir surrounded by the foothills of the Andes. We had Martin's zodiac-styled raft on a trailer following trouble-free behind. The weather was gorgeous and we were promised the same forecast for our several days in the area. My group of six returned to the lodge in good time for a fun cocktail hour and tales of their successes and failures in the several days before. Most were stunned by the clarity of the river and the beauty of the surrounding hills, but were a bit disappointed with the numbers of landed fish.



Harry's friend Gene Koechler is holding the rod

As the tales were recounted it became apparent that one member of the group was way ahead in numbers of landed fish. Very carefully and diplomatically I explained that this member had become an accomplished fisherman in his home waters. He could read the water, cast accurately and just plain fish well with his compiled knowledge. There is a lesson in this - *preparation*. Success requires serious casting practice along with reading as much as possible of the research done by others who had fished the area prior to your visit!

Gene and I were offered a float for the next day, to be made in two parts - a morning float ending in front of the lodge, then lunch and siesta, followed by an afternoon float bringing us home in time for the cocktail hour. We both quickly agreed and were delighted with the relaxed plan. When we reached the launching spot, Martin and the boat attendant necessary for the shuttle began looking downstream, shading the sides of their sunglasses against the early morning glare. I could see small dimples on the surface and a few upper lips sipping something a cast away from the half-launched raft. Martin said, "They are still here, Harrito,

you remember from two years ago?" I did remember once prodded. "We have never been able to catch one ... they are fantasmas (ghosts)." The attendant and Martin readied the boat and tackle, and while they were busy I tied on a small black fly, size 18, on an impossibly thin tippet.

When they were ready to launch I asked if we could all remain as quiet as the raft on the sand would allow, and to not use the oars but to just slowly lower the anchor. Then we all sat quietly for an agonizingly long five minutes. The fish were again feeding actively on the surface in the film, with sometimes as many as five fish showing at once. I worked out some line well away from their cone of vision, guessing the very short distance needed to land the fly two feet in front of the pod. I thought of the advice of my coach Ed as I made the presentation, with a slight up-twitch of the rod tip just before the fly landed. Then a slow count to three and an ever so slight twitch with the index finger of my line hand - and a solid strike followed! I would love to say that we boated a trophy, but after several rolls and tugs the fish came free. But it did not dim the moment. The attendant was cheering and running the bank, Martin was slapping my back, and Gene enjoying a cigar not even looking surprised... a compliment in itself. I had finally fooled one of the ghosts!

We continued the float and several hundred metres downstream I tried a San Juan worm. Martin turned it over and over in his hands, saying it had never been tried on the river. We saw a bulging rise under a limb nearby, so I cast three feet upstream from the fish and it greyhounded with abandon across the surface, taking the fly fiercely. We netted the 1½ kilo rainbow and released it after the pictures. Martin declared the area 'Gitano's Esquina', and called other guides that night saying I had been awarded that honour because of 'the Ghost and the Worm' incidents.



Nice rainbow Harry

That afternoon we landed a few fish, though the bright Patagonian summer sun had put the fish down and the water was warming quickly. The next day provided similar morning weather and good results, with Stimulators and Elk Hair Caddis flies taking a few on the surface. Black Leech Bead Heads fished deep and slow brought the best results. In the afternoon some dark clouds were evident and I voted that Gene and I prepare our gear for the next day's arduous journey further south. It proved a wise decision, as there was a terrible thunderstorm with marble-sized hail mid-afternoon denting the shuttle cars and the spirits of the group of six anglers. Gene tapped my door after the storm as I was packing, and simply said, "I owe you".

We had a grand last evening at the Estancia Quillen, which included an asado grande (big barbecue) of lamb, great Argentine wines, and many toasts to Martin's and the Estancia's staff. Martin tapped a glass near the end of the evening, and when quiet reigned he produced a tanned lamb skin with a small leather label attached, which he presented to me as a parting gift. The bed cover had my wife's and my cat's names tooled into the leather label. I was

reduced to tears when we parted the next day in the Bariloche airport. We said our good bye with looks and the usual South American hug, but neither of us could speak.

We left in the dark the next morning for the airport in Bariloche. The group of six were flying to the U.S. and Gene and I to El Calafate, our first step towards Lake Strobel.

We had a pleasant and restful two-hour flight to Calafate, and after collecting our luggage were met by Brian Cavaleri, who manages Laguna Verde Lodge on Lake Strobel. We agreed to overnight there as planned, so we would be rested ready for the demanding journey of four hours by truck to the lodge.

Gene and I had joked together but had been more than a little concerned about the likely condition of the road that was the buzz about this location in the fly-fishing industry. I had received stern warnings from a client I had sent there the season before. Brian laughed about our apprehension and said that it had all been fixed. At first I thought this was just 'guide talk' but he seemed serious enough so I was momentarily relieved.



And another!

We checked into a hotel and then walked through the downtown stores. A light lunch in a café and some shopping for Scotch, and then it was time for cocktails. Brian's choice of location for dinner offered excellent Calamari and a good selection of the favoured Argentine Malbecs. On to dinner after that, and then an early night with the following day's journey on our minds. We set out very early the next day, stopping for a break after two hours, and then after two more hours travelling we were at the lodge. The road was not an issue; the last thirty minutes being on a well-crowned rock road that had none of the bowling ball-sized rocks that had made the drive so famous.

The small, impeccably clean lodge provided us with a room each with a private bath and heating or air conditioning as needed. The lodge is staffed by a sister and brother who had been perfectly trained. I visit many lodges in a year in my job and it gets no better than this. The food was exceptional! We unpacked, returned to the living room area, and then realized the strength of the wind as the windows rattled in their casings, many having cracked earlier due to these vibrations. There was no anemometer there to measure the speed, but the wind howled ferociously.

For the short time remaining in the afternoon Brian offered to walk with us to a small lake just below the lodge, where one could catch countless numbers of two to three kilo rainbows on black streamers retrieved slowly. The Malbec won the toss, so we sat and chatted, passing on the offering of Mud Lake...not even connected to Strobel. We had not come six thousand miles to be satisfied with small trout!

The next morning we readied our gear and rode in a Land Rover for 20 minutes, finally stopping near two four-wheel Quads. I was told that Gene would ride behind Brian on one

and I would drive the other. Twenty-five years ago I had owned a Honda Quad, but that seemed like a long time ago. Brian showed me the goat track down the side of the mountain and, if I am honest, I almost declined to try it. Anyway, off we went! Closer to the sheltered bay I could see where the Torpedos were, as BC called them. I managed the trip down safely, but can assure you I thought of nothing else but the trip back along the same route. I eventually managed the round trip but would hate to have to do it again.



Gene with a 'small' rainbow. And the weather was rather cool

We reached the 'sheltered cove where a nice picnic veranda affair had been built. It had all the water heating inventory of gas and pans for hot soup and Mate', along with a barbecue pit, and a howling wind lashing the entire scene. Gene marched down to the comfortable footing of the sloped sandy beach, which dropped off quickly to emerald green water with clear visibility to four meters. I joined him shortly and we cast like we needed a fish to eat. We caught a few between 4 and 5 kilos, but saw much larger fish cruising slowly by. On a non-windy day they would have been easy to get a fly in front of. The fish were there, huge, in good numbers and willing. They could be sight-fished like no other place I have fished for fish of their size. Later in the day we would walk to a point that was open to the lake and I, at 230 lb, could not stand still in the wind. It rocked me like a willow! From there, just past the small but annoying shore waves, I could glimpse enormous Torpedoes sauntering by and striking anything that glinted in their path. I caught a few, as did Gene, and they were double digit fish - but not the 10 kilo fish we had both hoped for.

I will suggest that the competent use of a two-handed rod would be of great assistance in this location. I am trying to resist this current trend in fly-fishing, but here it would have been a real asset. The sister and brother staff members joined us for the ride back to Calafate, as there was a break before the next group came in. We met them and now consider them friends. Gene and I left for Buenos Aires the next day - a bit tired and with a new notch carved in the handle of our adventures together. However, I will not be satisfied until I return and land one of the monsters I saw so tantalizingly close and willing. Another scrap of paper goes into the Bucket List - Jurassic Lake, home of the Dinosaur Trout!

Harry Robertson

A Creek Somewhere

(Hugh Maltby reflects on a memorable day fishing a Tassie stream)

A stay at Hayes on Brumby's is not complete without a day spent fishing a small creek somewhere. So on a magnificent Tasmanian autumn day in March, with dappled sunshine and a light breeze, Tony (Mitchem) and I headed out with Peter Hayes to spend the day hunting the elusive brown trout.

There's that wonderful feeling of anticipation when you're standing on a high bank, searching the water below for a fish or two. Nothing for a few minutes, and then, right on cue, along came Mr Brown. Hungry and in search of food, he cruised past, and then we set the trap. A Philbrick nymph would have been great, but I didn't have one. (I guess I'll have to wait for the next Association auction to acquire a few.) However a Ray Butterworth hopper might do the job just as well. With heart pounding and hands shaking, out went the hopper, landing close to the edge. A few minutes pass, and then our friend returned. Mr Brown made a sip here and a sip there, and then ever so casually cruised up to the hopper, sucked it in and turned away. I lifted the cane rod and the hook was set and the game was on. The water erupted as off he charged, seeking refuge in every corner of the pool. But soft hands and lots of helpful advice saw Mr Brown, all 26 inches of him and just over 4 lb, staring at the camera. Then he was gently laid back in the water, and released to give pleasure to another fellow angler.



This scene was repeated several times that day, as I shared a magnificent day and many similar fish with Tony, my nephew and companion for the day. Of course none of this would have been possible without the support of Australia's foremost trout guide, Peter Hayes. What a legend he is, and what an unforgettable day.



Cane Day

Cane Day this year is on Sunday, June 19, commencing at 9 am at the Red Tag Casting Pools, Fairfield Park.

BBQ lunch provided.

All welcome.

More details next month.

ATF Report

It seems the battle continues. The Yarra Ranges Council has produced a draft report of its new *Flora & Fauna Management Strategy 2010 - Sustaining biodiversity for current & future generations*. (Draft Version November 2010).

The grenade is on page 34 of a 100 page document, where Objective 1.7 – “To Protect Aquatic Habitats for Fauna” gives as a ‘Strategic Priority’, “To discourage the practice of stocking waterways with exotic species i.e. trout.”

They might have some difficulties removing the trout from the Yarra – there’s a lot of them there, and trout haven’t needed stocking in the Yarra as they’ve done pretty well all by themselves. But the underlying philosophy is ominous. Fortunately the State Government’s official policy is that our trout fishery is an important and valuable resource. To quote from just one DPI Media Release, “The Victorian trout fishery is a major social and economic contributor to regional communities, with the recent National Recreational and Indigenous Fishing Survey (2003) indicating nearly half of all trout harvested in Australia are caught in Victoria.”

So the Yarra Ranges Council would appear to be at odds with the State Government. And the ATF is taking up the cudgels – letters are being written, Ministers phoned, and senior bureaucrats being contacted to have this issue resolved. Our thanks to the ATF.

Big River Trip – Enoch’s Point

Friday April 29 – Sunday May 1

... At John Pilkington’s very special place at Enoch’s Point on the Big River.

This annual trip, which is very popular and a highlight in the VFFA calendar, is on again this year, in late Autumn.

Numbers are limited and several members have already booked their place, but there are still a few vacancies left.

The Convenor is John Pilkington, and interested members should contact John on -

Work: 9225 8616 Home: 9489 2186 Mobile: 0407 356 676



NSW Report

(from David Mozina)



Trout numbers on the rise

There are loads of big trout making their way up the waterways around Jindabyne. Some gorgeous browns and rainbows and a sprinkling of brooks can be found, and the average size of the fish caught has increased over the past month. A few northward of 5lb have been hit. The much colder water temperatures and higher water levels have lured many trout into the streams, and I am sure that the increase in numbers of big fish is due to pre-spawning activity.

After all the rain we have had this season the past few weeks have been kind, and next week's forecast is looking glorious. The recent burst of sunny weather has also seen dry fly action pick up further (it was already brilliant!). There has been some good mayfly action over recent weeks and although late to show themselves, hoppers are more abundant and are on now on the wing. Look for stretches of riverbank strewn with tussocky plains and plunk those hoppers hard against the bank. The sunnier and warmer parts of the days have been the best.

The trout know that their "easy" feeding window is rapidly closing, so well-presented flies are always bringing good responses. As I wrote in my last column, don't be afraid to use big flies – size 14 or 12 duns will do the job with the added benefit of allowing one to fish the faster water with ease. The back sections of the runs and shallow lines of pools are accounting for the bulk of the better fish. The trusty Stockdale and MK dun are still taking the most hits. Stimulators, caddis, Humpies and Wulffs will all work. Streams such as the Moonbah, Gungarlin, Thredbo and Eucumbene are all holding good numbers of trout with the usual suspects holding the bigger trout.

For those anglers looking for solitude, peacefulness and a pristine river packed with wild trout look no further than a stay at the Gungarlin River Hut – information available on my website. Although very basic, the hut offers the angler a unique experience and is centrally located to all the streams within the Kosciuszko National Park. It sits within private property and has extensive frontage to the Gungarlin River.

David Mozina – Match the Hatch *fly fishing*

www.matchthehatch.com.au and (02) 6457 8342, 0458 548565



Report From Way Out West

(The following brief report is from our regular Warrnambool correspondent – Jim Blakeslee)

Members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club have made an autumn trip to New Zealand for a number of years. In 2011, Bob Loch, Bill Hewett, Terry Simmons, Alan Richardson, Jason Setches and Jim Blakeslee flew direct to Queenstown on March 14. After picking up our rental cars and doing the necessary shopping for food and drink, we drove through Queenstown and continued west to our first stop at Glenorchy. It was home base for the next two days. Light rain during the night didn't dampen our spirits as we barbequed our steaks and planned our moves for the next day's fishing.

It was still raining and dismal in the morning for what looked like a wet, dreary day ahead. We needn't have worried though. Alan, Jason and I decided to fish the Routeburn River, while Bob, Bill and Terry headed for Diamond Lake. Just as we arrived the rain stopped, the skies cleared and we had a great time. The water was crystal clear but there were no rises on the Routeburn, so I initially tried polaroiding and sinking #16 Pheasant tails and bead head nymphs, then a cicada pattern cast into likely runs adjacent to stands of beech forest. Nothing was biting except the sandflies. Now I had been doing well using a #10 Latex Hopper on the Merri before I left for NZ, and since there was one on the wool patch on my vest and I don't mind experimenting, I thought that I might as well give it a try. My first cast with the hopper resulted in a swirl and I was hooked into a beautiful, leaping, cart-wheeling silver bullet of a rainbow. After landing and releasing it, I moved up the run and in short order, hooked and landed another 3 rainbows. All were 3 to 3½ pounds and in magnificent condition.



Bob Loch with one of several rainbows he caught

After meeting back at the car with Alan and Jason for lunch, I described my success with the Latex Hopper. We then drove further upstream and cast Hoppers into likely looking deep pockets and pools, catching more lovely, hard-fighting rainbows for our efforts. Meanwhile, at Diamond Lake, Bob and Bill waded out from the edge and cast to rising fish. They got stuck into some good browns using #14 Klinkhamers and small dries. They had enjoyed a great time and looked very pleased with themselves – sipping G&Ts – when we got back from the Routeburn. Bob had kept a 3 lb brownie and Jason a similar sized rainbow, and these became sashimi and sushi for our entree.

The next day we walked into Sylvan Lake. It was very scenic but not much fishy action. Jason, Alan and I retreated to Glenorchy Lagoon, while Bob, Bill and Terry had a go at the Routeburn. The following morning, we drove back to Queenstown, then south. Bob, Terry and Bill fished the Brightwater and saw plenty, hooked some but landed none. Alan, Jason and I went straight to Mossburn where we moved into a small weatherboard "Mousehouse" for 4 nights. After unloading, we drove to the upper Oreti for a couple hours, where Jason and Alan both landed browns of 5 to



Jim with a top Mackenzie country rainbow

5½ pounds – a nice welcome to Southland. That night the wind howled and it poured. The Oreti rose and coloured up. Bob, Bill and Terry decided to have a look around Te Anau, and then fish Lake Thomas. Alan, Jason and I waded the flats on the north end of the South Mavora Lake, polaroiding for cruising browns and rainbows as the sky cleared. We were all rewarded with nice fish - 3 to 4 lbs in size. Three of my browns took a #6 Carey Special mud-eye pattern and a rainbow took a #10 black Woolly Bugger.

Next day, the weather was still raw, so we explored the small burns. Alan, Jason and I checked the Hamilton Burn and the Aparima River. We saw some nice ones but the barometer was falling rapidly and they seemed off the bite. We only caught tiddlers that day. Next morning the Oreti was clearing at Mossburn, so we headed to the upper part of the river. The river had fallen and was clear, but the fish we saw mostly refused our offerings – except for one 5 lb brown I landed from a backwater that took a #16 Pheasant tail suspended under a large dry. That night it poured again. In the morning, all the Southland rivers were in flood as we drove north to Twizel – our base for the next week. There, we had clear sunny skies, moderate winds and a great time. That's what we like about Mackenzie country. Waters fished included Lake Poaka, the Tekapo River, Gray River, Hakateramea River, Maerewhenua River, Mount Cook Stream and finally, when it had cleared enough by our last day, the Ahuriri River. Most of the action was on small sunken nymphs and the occasional dry, such as a #16 parachute Adams. But there were a few surprises, like the big brownies and the rainbow that hammered a #4 Spuddler that I tossed into runs on the Maerewhenua, but that's another story. So, there it is. That's all for NZ this trip. *Jim Blakeslee*

End of Season Event

The 2011 Season Closing Day is at Dobsons on the Breakaway.

Date: Sunday, May 22

We will again return to the Goulburn River for our season-ending trip to enjoy fishing, friendship, and a self-catering BBQ.

For those wishing to make a weekend of it we have reserved Cabin accommodation at the Breakaway Twin Rivers Caravan Park. This is a great location on the banks of the Goulburn River at Acheron. In the past those who made it a weekend trip have had a great time and even managed to fool a fish or two.

Hugh Maltby is convening this trip and would love to hear from you.

He can be contacted on the following numbers:

Business: 9455 9017 Mobile: 0400 887 065 Home: 9459 2241

The UK Report

(from our UK correspondent, Phil Bailey)

The season here is about to start so it is a bit difficult to give you a fishing report. But what about this:

Over the past year I decided that I wanted to learn some emerging new techniques and through this process have become one of the few non-Italian Casting Instructors and the first in the UK.

So what's different you ask? There are three key pieces of equipment:



1. A 7'6" very fast tapered rod. With the Italian school, we have developed a specific rod for this. Yes, it can be used in other casting techniques but the taper is very specific to the type of casting used. AtomSix (Steve Parkes) has made the rods for us using the very latest Carbon Fibre and Resins from 3M. He also uses a technique that ensures the blank is uniform throughout and does not collapse under load (e.g. go oval). These are really well-priced state of the art rods. If you want details, drop me a note.
2. A double taper 3-weight line with a long forward taper. These types of lines are hard to get sometimes but I think that shortly we'll have a permanent supply. The best line was the old 3M Scientific Anglers Mastery line.
3. A 5 metre leader. Now when I heard about this I thought it was over the top. But no, these long leaders (with only 4 sections) are absolutely necessary when on the water, as the casts require leaders that cover currents but collapse under certain casts.

There are 7 specific casts which have been developed to cast over fast water and under trees and shrubs. To pass the accreditation, I had to make ten casts which, from 30 metres, had to pass under a park bench. I had to select 3 of the casts and succeed to qualify.

But it is the actual casting technique that is fundamentally different and which is difficult for traditional casters to fathom. For a start, the action is always undertaken on the same axis in both the back and forward casts. This is the first challenge, as you need to stop coming in across the front of your body when finishing the cast. You also need to keep the rod in the same plane, that is - not twist it around, which is what most people do because this is more comfortable. Secondly, the cast is made in a plane that does not use any 'stop' in either the back or forward cast. You drift with the back cast in a continuous movement, which replaces the traditional 'stop', and carries the line speed. Then lastly, it is the finish of the forward cast where a 'thrust' is made forward with the tip on the same axis and plane as the reset of the casting action. The result is even more speed and a loop that reduces down to 3 - 4 inches with the fly arriving on the water at the same time as the leader and fly line.

Yep, there is much more to it, but boy are these things fantastic fishing casts. I am now going to incorporate this new technique into my guiding and get some reasonably priced courses up and running for anyone interested in learning some more casts for their fishing situations.

Phil Bailey

Peter Boag presents a copy of “The Place For An Angler” to The Flyfishers’ in London

In October of 2010 I had the good fortune to visit The Flyfishers’ Club, London, courtesy of VFFA member Dr Rodney Foale. My purpose in visiting was twofold. Firstly, I wanted to walk through its hallowed doors and experience some of its rich history. I was not disappointed.

Secondly, and equally importantly, I wanted to hand deliver a copy of the VFFA history, *The Country For An Angler*. Whilst waiting for Rodney to arrive, I was fortunate to be met by, and made very welcome by the Flyfishers’ Librarian, David Beazley. He showed me a very small portion of its some 3,000 book angling library, and some wonderful memorabilia. A valedictory dinner for their long-serving secretary was happening on the same evening of my visit. Owing to this circumstance, my visit was shorter than I would otherwise have wished.

I presented a copy of the history to David, and have since received from him a letter of appreciation, enclosed as follows for your information.

Dear Peter,

This is just a note to thank you for your kindness in giving The Flyfishers’ a copy of your history.

This is exactly the book I do like to put on our shelves because it will one day resolve some vital questions in the mind of one of our members – as well as give general pleasure to our browsers and borrowers. Thank you also for inscribing it to us – so much nicer.

Having taken a closer look at “The Country For An Angler”, I am impressed by how vigorous the VFFA has been and what a wonderful story it has behind it.

Sorry we only saw you briefly in The Flyfishers’.

Yours Faithfully,

David Beazley.

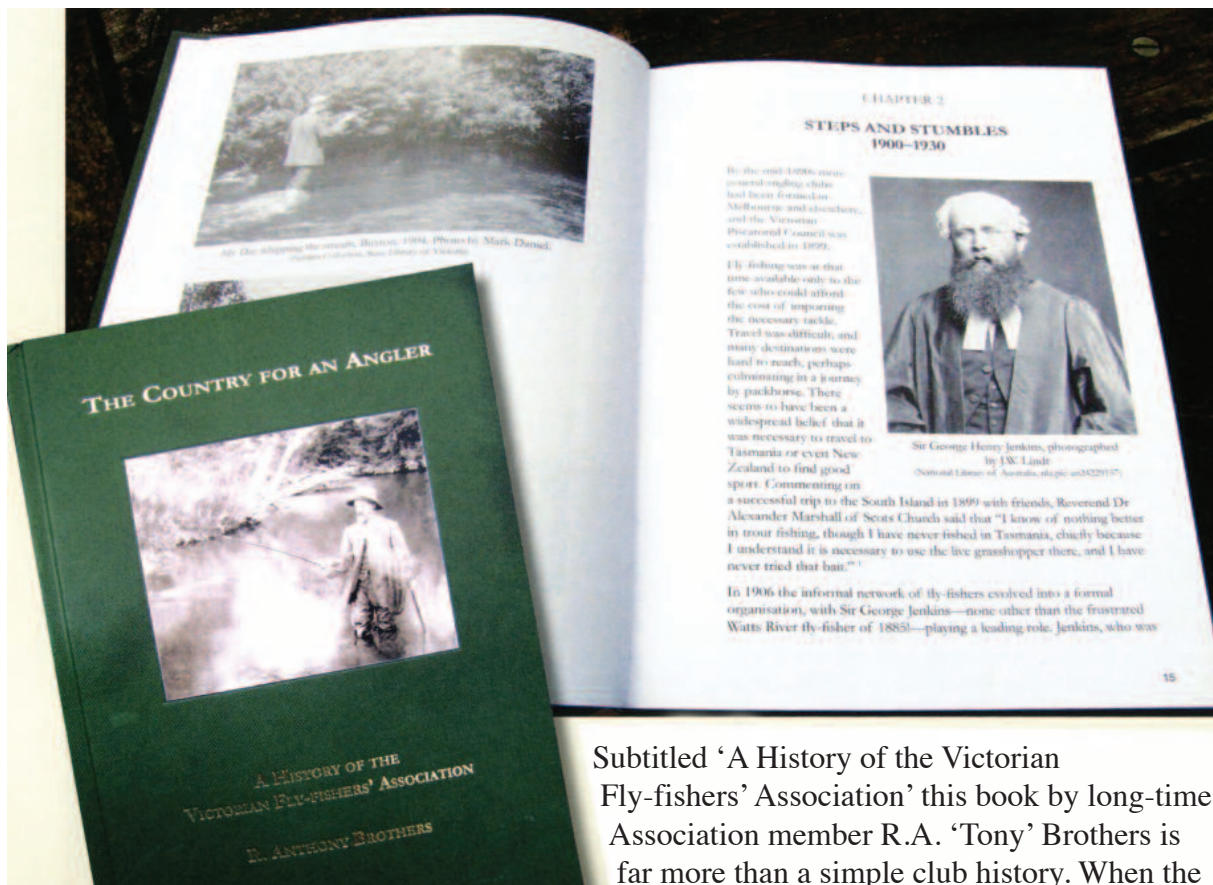
My thanks to Rodney Foale for making my visit to The Flyfishers’ Club possible, and to Librarian David Beazley for showing me some of its treasures. I hope for a longer visit when I am next in London.

Philip Weigall has written a very complimentary review of the history, which appeared in the latest issue of the *FlyFisher* magazine and is reprinted, with Philip’s permission, in this newsletter.

We have a small number of Deluxe, as well as a limited number of Standard Editions still available. For those who wish to purchase a copy, or a further copy, an order form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Peter Boag

Philip Weigall's Review of The Country For An Angler



Subtitled 'A History of the Victorian Fly-fishers' Association' this book by long-time Association member R.A. 'Tony' Brothers is far more than a simple club history. When the VFFA's standing as the central flyfishing body in Victoria (in one form or another) for over 100 years is taken into account, plus a membership base reaching interstate and including pivotal historical figures, you already have the makings of a book of broad interest. Add efforts to give the VFFA's position context by tracing the history of Australian fly-fishing back to its very beginnings in the mid 1800s, and you have a compelling read!

Ably assisted by many, particularly Rick Keam (probably Australia's preeminent flyfishing researcher) and Peter Boag, Brothers has penned a truly remarkable and illuminating story. There are new insights into Australian fly-fishing's household names like Lyne, Stewart, Scholes and Allen; and just as importantly, coverage of some equally important figures less well known outside the VFFA, such as Mick Martin and Jack Ritchie.

The best histories are a yardstick, wittingly or not, with which to help gauge the present, and its in this sense that the book most excels. Far from discovering that yesteryear was some sort of trouble-free trout fishing nirvana, we learn of devastating droughts, environmental destruction, poverty, rampant illegal fishing, excessive catches and conflict in fishing politics. There were great days too of course - the Geehi and Kiewa in their short heydays; Lakes Eucumbene and Eildon as they filled. As much as anything, there's a sense of *déjà vu* as we read of fly-fishing experiences and issues 50 or 100 years ago that are not so different to those encountered today. The book is enriched by dozens of black and white pictures, both drawings

and photographs, including some very old pictures of anglers and trout waters that are remarkable for their quality.

Unfortunately for such a significant publication, copies of *The Country For An Angler* are limited. However at the time of writing, 'a few boxes' of the standard edition (\$70 plus postage) and a few copies of the limited edition (\$250 plus postage) remain. To purchase a copy visit www.vffa.org.au or email info@vffa.org.au

Sadly Tony Brothers passed away just before *The Country For An Angler* was published, but in this book he's left us quite a legacy. Published by The Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association, 2010 (Produced by Stevens Publishing).

Omeo Report

(by Humpy)

The early autumn fishing around Omeo has been great. All the rivers are flowing well and the water temperatures are ideal. The Mitta River, upstream of the Bundarra, is fishing particularly well. There are lots of fish around the 1 lb mark, along with a smattering of larger fish of 2 and 3 lb. As you would expect at this time of the year, they are looking up and are happy to take a dry fly. The Royal Wulff reigns supreme but they will take most patterns. During the evening a small Adams or Parachute Adams can be handy. Good fishing is also being experienced in Middle Creek, near the Omeo Highway. Fish up to 1½ pounds have been caught recently.

The Bundarra River is fishing well, but the fish are a little smaller. Likewise the Cobungra River. It is producing good fishing in the Innisfail area, although, like most of our rivers this year, the grasshopper fishing is not what it could be. There are reasonable numbers of hoppers around. Some are quite large and some are still small, but the trout are a just indifferent to hopper patterns.

The Livingston River at Cassilis is fishing OK to mostly small browns, although Christie Arras from the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers' Club nailed a nice fish of 1½ lb and another of 1¼ lb recently. These are well above the average. The Gibbo River continues to produce good numbers of small rainbows with the occasional larger brown. The Buemba is also producing some small trout. This is a lovely little stream in Victoria's High Plains that has quite good access.

Autumn fishing should continue to be good over the next month or two. We are continuing to receive regular heavy rain, which wrecks the fishing for a few days but it soon returns to good fishing conditions, and this is a lot better than the drought and fish kills due to high temperatures that have happened over recent years.

Hubert Reichelt and Bernard Holbery in New Zealand - February 2011

I was at home in front of the television when disturbing news of the Christchurch earthquake was reported. I immediately phoned Hubert, who was deeply concerned as we were to fly out to Christchurch on the following day. A phone call to the airline confirmed that our flight was still happening, so early the next morning we arrived at Tullamarine - to then be told that only passengers with New Zealand passports were allowed entry to Christchurch. So to plan B. We booked some accommodation close to the airport, and after several phone conversations with Hubert's travel agent, found some flights for the following day.

It was a strange route. We flew from Melbourne to Brisbane, then took a direct flight to Dunedin. So after two very early mornings we finally arrived at Dunedin, where a couple of rather weary but hopeful anglers boarded the shuttle bus to take us to our car. We then made our way up the beautiful green valley to Gore, stopping on the way to check some of the rivers that lay in our path. The last river we saw was the mighty Mataura. It was running high and a little discoloured, and consequently the dun hatches in the previous few weeks had been quite poor. This information was given to us by some of the locals while we enjoyed a counter meal at the pub. But Hubert remained positive, and assured me that trout in the local waters were already nervous at the prospect of our arrival.

We were on the water early next morning after a hearty breakfast, making our way to the Mataura for a quick look. We picked up a couple of those magnificent Mataura browns in the short time we were there, before Hubert and I decided to drive further up the valley. My role on this trip soon became obvious - I would be for ever opening farm gates while Hubert did the driving. We eventually arrived at the river, with the weather now pleasant and warm, and it wasn't long before I floated a size 16 blowfly over a rising fish. The fly was engulfed and a brown of about 5 lb came to the net. We marvelled at its beautiful colours, with Hubert commenting that it was as fat as a rugby ball.

Over the next few days Hubert and I landed fish up to 8 lb, and I landed some of the best river fish I have ever caught. There is no doubt that Hubert knew his rivers well and is a top fisherman. However I wondered at times if he was in the early stages of Alzheimer's, as every time I asked him the names of these rivers his mind seemed to go blank.

We often visited the farm houses in the areas we fished with boxes of chocolates, and mostly it was just the farmers' wives at home. I'm pretty sure Hubert was aware of the husbands' whereabouts when we made these visits, and at one stage I asked him when he last bought a nice box of chocolates for his wife. The Alzheimer's kicked in again, as I had no response from him other than a few giggles and a grin.

The following day produced 14 fish between us in tough conditions with very little insect activity. Hubert landed the grand daddy of the river and we were both impressed with the superb quality of trout in this stream. At the end of the day we agreed that it had been a great day's fishing, with both of us working together, sighting fish and rises for each other.

The following day saw us in Athol on the upper Mataura, where we spotted some 40 fish, many being trophy size. At one stage I shouted to Hubert, "There is a fish in front of me here



Bernard ...



... and Hubert



that is the size of a wombat!” He assured me that this was the norm in this section. Late afternoon we were fishing the Brightwater, with only one other fishermen in sight. Duns were sailing down the river and fish were rising to them. I tied on a parachute hare’s ear and cast to a riser, the fish eventually sipping my fly. Unfortunately I then lost him in the weeds. We stayed there until late evening, basking in another fabulous day’s fishing.

Over the next few days Hubert and I landed some beautiful fish and saw some magnificent New Zealand countryside, all the while racking up the kilometres in the car. Overall the fishing conditions were difficult in our time there, but we still caught fish and had a ball doing it. The final day saw Hubert and myself on a small river where we landed two beautiful browns. At lunchtime we drove to a petrol station to wash the car in preparation for leaving it. In the late afternoon we drove to the Mataura River, where Hubert put the finishing touches on the car. I fished the river just downstream and landed 6 magnificent Mataura browns, all falling to a size 18 parachute Adams fished in the ripples. It finished a very memorable New Zealand trip. Hubert was a wealth of knowledge and we had some great laughs together and a great time. Thank you Hubert.

From your partner in crime, *Bernard Holbery*.

Dinner at the Kelvin Club

In recent times there has been a little confusion regarding dinner before the monthly meetings. The Kelvin Club has been making adjustments in an attempt to secure it’s future. However, these arrangements have not been entirely satisfactory for those dining at the Kelvin before the meeting. I recently met with John Lanica, the Kelvin manager, and believe we have sorted out some of the issues.

In brief, we are reverting back to the format which worked very well for us in the past. I strongly urge as many members as is possible to have dinner before the meetings. It adds to the general enjoyment of the evening, but even more critically, we need your support for arrangements to continue.

It would be appreciated if people intending to have dinner could advise John Lanica at the Kelvin by the Tuesday before the meeting. *Peter Boag*

FLY OF THE MONTH

Wigram's Robin



This issue has featured an article by David Scholes. Perhaps we might finish the newsletter by describing a fly that was one of his favourites – Dick Wigram's famous Robin. Scholes had lots of very positive things to say about the Robin; a couple of quotes from his *Fly-Fishing in Australia* illustrate the point:

“Lake fishing with a matuka is often most successful either from the shore or a boat, when the trout are either feeding visibly on some particular food item, say tadpoles, or when there may be no evidence whatever of their presence, called ‘blind searching’. Indeed, when wind disturbs the surface and cloud obscures the sun so that the dry fly is a lost cause and polaroiding is impossible, some method of wet fly fishing is the only hope and blind searching the answer. ... Over the years I have tried umpteen different patterns, my favour waxing and waning from one to the other, until Dick Wigram came up with his Robin. Now I don't bother with anything else; it works under all conditions when longtail fishing is best. Mind you, I have them in two sizes, with and without jungle cock eyes. But I am convinced that the fluorescent wool or chenille end on the body makes a difference, and I rather prefer the latter.”

Then again: “The ‘lure’ type of wet fly, the ‘exciter’, representing nothing at all except something to chase and kill, is effective in lakes and along the semi flooded edges of rivers, or, when they are actually flooded, in the backwaters and ditches. Meet the Robin, then, greatest ‘lure’ wet I have ever known: so great that I now carry no other. Whereas a few years ago I carted about with me a variety of matukas, Watson's Fancy, Yeti, Bloody Mary and so on, I am now reduced to the Robin alone. Created by the late Dick Wigram, and given experimentally to a few friends, this pattern I feel sure will be with us forever.”

David then gives the details of the traditional pattern:

Materials

- Hook:** Size 8 Round Bend (or limerick)
Thread: Black 6/0
Butt: Red Fluorescent Wool (or red seal's fur).

Body: Black Seal's Fur
Rib: Oval Gold Tinsel
Black Feather: Black hen (undyed), ribbed in about half way along the shank and cocked up by the rib.
Eye: Jungle Cock

Tying method:

1. Place the hook in the vise and tie on the thread, then run the thread down along the shank to just before the bend.
2. Tie in the red wool for the butt, wind the thread forward one third of the shank length, then wind the red wool forward and tie it off.
3. Take a small length of the ribbing material and tie it in securely, leaving it to hang loose.
4. Dub the black seal's fur on the thread and wind it forward, building up the body. Tie it off just short of the eye.
5. Take two matching black hen feathers about twice the shank length, place them together so that the dull sides are adjacent and they curve inwards towards each other with the tips level. Strip away any fuzz at the base, leaving a section of bare stem. The length of the remaining feather sections on the two matching feathers should be about 1½ shank lengths or a little longer.
6. Mount the two matching feathers on top of the fly, tie in the stem butts firmly at the eye, then hold the tips together in your left hand as you wing the ribbing through the feathers close to the beginning of the black seal's fur dubbing so that the feathers are cocked up slightly. Continue winding the ribbing towards the eye with two or three more turns. Tie the ribbing off. Trim away the feather butts at the eye.
7. If you have these feathers, tie in two small matching jungle cock eyes on either side of the head. Whip finish and add a drop of varnish at the head to complete the fly.
8. Having given the traditional and original tying, I'll now be a heretic of the first order and suggest that instead tying in the two matching hen wings for the back feather, an alternative method suggested in a few references is to tie in a black rabbit zonker strip. Rabbit fur is soft and very mobile, and this alternative 'wing' offers two advantages – it will be more 'alive' and mobile in the water, and it is likely to produce a more durable fly. I offer this as an alternative worth experimenting with, and just hope that David would forgive me. The picture of the alternative fly is this:





LIBRARY NEWS

All members should remember that the Mick Martin Memorial Library is one of the most extensive collections of fly-fishing literature in Australia. It is valuable in its own right but is a great asset to members wishing to expand their knowledge or who simply enjoy sitting by the fireside and vicariously enjoying the exploits of others. In addition, the library boasts a number of videos on trout fishing. Our librarian Marty Rogers will be available prior to each general meeting to assist members wishing to borrow books or videos.

The library is divided into three parts.

Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.

Part 2 Books available for reference only and not to be taken from the library.

Part 3 Books bequeathed to the Association and not to be taken from the cabinet.

OVERDUE BOOKS

Our librarian reports that a number of members have failed to return library books on time. Could all those book loving members who have failed to return books promptly do so.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "Geehi to Great Lake"	\$45.00 each
Columbia Shirts	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo.....	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon)	\$35.00 each
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
Diaries	\$2.00 each
<i>The Australian Trout by Jack Ritchie</i>	\$20.00
<i>(Special offer – buy one, get one free!)</i>	
V.F.F.A. car stickers	\$2.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Hugh Maltby prior to the monthly General Meeting on telephone 9455 9017.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2010 Annual Dinner:

- Armadale Angler • Aussie Angler • Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery
- Compleat Angler Box Hill • Compleat Fly Fisher Melbourne
- Daniel Hackett, RiverFly, Tasmania • Fly Life Publications • J M Gillies
- Lowes Furniture • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall • Michael Steven's Publishing •
- Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Nick Taransky - Bamboo Rod Maker • Peter Hayes, Cressy • Pro Angler Fishing Tackle • Ray Brown, Onkaparinga Flies & Cane Rods