



• REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST: PUBLICATION NO. VBH 2899 •

VOL. 61 NO.6

THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

APRIL 2013

Organisation No. A0024750J

P.O. Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne 3001

[www.vffa.org.au](http://www.vffa.org.au)

**April General Meeting**  
**Thursday, April 18, 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club -**  
**Guest Speaker – Fred Craker**

Our guest speaker for the April meeting is Fred Craker, who is a very lively and astute 84 year old. Fred, who lives in Warragul, has fly-fished for trout from an early age and is a prolific fly tier. He has written three books on fly-fishing and recently donated a very large collection of his flies to the Australian Fly Fishing Museum. He has fished in many places but obviously has spent much of his time on the lakes and rivers of Gippsland.

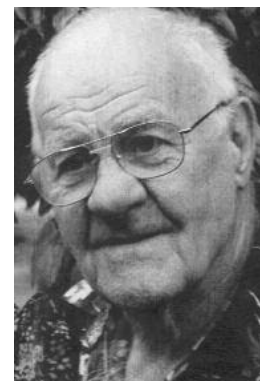
Fred will talk to us about his angling passions – pursuing trout with a fly rod and tying flies. He will also demonstrate the tying of a couple of his special flies. We have been assured that Fred is a very entertaining and informative speaker, so mark it in your diary – Thursday, April 18, 8 pm at the Celtic Club.

The Meeting will be preceded by Dinner at the Celtic Club, commencing promptly at 6:00 pm.

All members are invited, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking by 12 pm (lunchtime) on Wednesday, April 17, by –

Phone: 0498 254 497, and leave a message,

Or Email – [secretary@vffa.org.au](mailto:secretary@vffa.org.au)



# THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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## **April Index**

VFFA Office Holders .....	2	Elder Statesman - Andrew Mossman .....	13
The April Meeting with Fred Craker .....	3	Jim Allen on the Tasmanian Trout Fishery ..	19
Advance Notice - The May Meeting .....	3	Australian Fly Fishing Museum .....	24
March Report - with Bill Thomas .....	4	Report from Way Out West .....	26
President's Message – Terry Rogers .....	9	Fly of the Month .....	28
Editor's Desk – Lyndon Webb .....	11	VFFA Meetings & Activities .....	32

## **The April Meeting - with Fred Craker**

On Thursday April 18 we will have the company of Fred Craker, a very lively and entertaining 84 year old. Fred now lives in Warragul where he is currently managing a farm for a friend. He has fly-fished for trout from an early age, is a prolific fly tier, and has written three books on fly-fishing. He recently donated a very large collection of flies to the Australian Fly Fishing Museum in Clarendon, Tasmania.

Born in 1928, Fred grew up on a farm in Warrandyte. In his teenage years he attended Box Hill Technical School, travelling there by pushbike - a total of 42 km a day. His trade apprenticeship years required him to attend night school, and to get to his night classes he drove a horse and jinker to Ringwood Railway Station where he tethered the horse and went to school at Glenferrie by train. During these years he spent all his spare time out on rivers in the bush. In later life his travels took him to New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia, where he camped and fished with his dad, and thus developed a permanent attraction for creation and the natural bush that has lasted him all his life.

His hobbies have included fly-fishing for trout and any other sport fish he could cast a fly at; collecting rocks, minerals, fossils and gemstones; travelling and sightseeing and camping; and taking lots of photographs. He has held a number of jobs, and in recent times was a volunteer teacher at the Noojee primary school. About 27 years ago he started writing a book by typing with one finger on an old second-hand computer. He has since completed three books, the first on simple fly tying, then two more on the environment and fly-fishing for trout.

Fred will talk to us about his angling life - fishing for trout with a fly rod and tying flies. He will also demonstrate the tying of a couple of his flies. David Featherstone, who knows Fred well, assures us we are in for a very entertaining and informative evening, so mark it in your diary – Thursday, April 18, 8 pm at the Celtic Club.

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## **Advance Notice – the May Meeting**

It's now confirmed – the May meeting, on Thursday May 16, will be an auction of fly-fishing equipment.

The lots to be sold are mainly from the estate of the late Dr Tony Brothers, but may also include items from some other sources and estates. A small team is now putting together the lots and preparing a catalogue. The catalogue of the items to be sold will be included in the May newsletter as an insert.

Some high quality gear will go under the hammer, so come along prepared to pick up a bargain or two.

## March Report – with Bill Thomas

Bill was our guest speaker at the March meeting and proved a very popular choice. He is an engaging speaker and used a PowerPoint presentation and a well-honed selection of witty and captivating stories to describe his work on Sustainability at Bentleigh Secondary College. At the end of his talk he was given a very enthusiastic and lengthy round of applause. Bill leaves shortly on a trip funded by his Churchill Fellowship to visit a number of places in Europe where he will speak about his work here in Melbourne and gather information on Sustainable Practices in the countries he visits.



A summary of the text of his talk is given here:

When I was young the world seemed a very big place. Then in my teenage years I read that DDT was responsible for causing a thinning of penguin eggshells, and I realised then that what we do in one place can have a significant bearing on animals and plants in other places. There was a report recently of a Pacific Bluefin Tuna caught off the coast of the USA carrying radiation from Fukushima some 10,000 km away. So perhaps the world is not such a big place.

My grandfather was born in 1900 and died in the 1980s. I have many fond memories of my conversations with him. On one occasion he described to me the incredible things he had seen in his lifetime: the revolution in transport from the horse and cart to motor vehicles, immunisation, humans venturing into space and even landing on the moon, and miniaturisation. He mentioned the advent of computers. I recently took some students into the museum and they had on display one of the original computers. It was huge, yet my watch has probably got more power in it than that old computer. So miniaturisation is certainly a big thing. These have all been major changes in my grandfather's life, and he said that he had 'lived through very exciting times.' At one point he said: "I've heard that people can now talk into their watches and other people in other places can hear what they are saying." So this 'Dick Tracy' stuff that we read about as kids is now the reality.

We are living in a time when the problems we have now will be solved by kids using technology that hasn't yet been invented. We are training kids now with information that will be useless to them two years after they finish their courses. So it is the way that we teach kids and the thirst for knowledge that they have that will allow them to go the extra yard and see the opportunities they can take advantage of. In 1854 Chief Seattle of the Suqwamish tribe said, "Teach your children what we taught our children - that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth, and if men spit on the ground they spit on themselves." And that is equally relevant to us today.

At Bentleigh Secondary College where I work we have a mission, and that mission is to look after this generation because they are going to be the custodians of our future. Mike asked me

earlier tonight what the real driver was for me. My motivation is that I'm selfish. I'm an owner-operator of three children, or at least I think I am, though they think they own and operate me. And it is their children who will reap the benefits of the stuff we are doing now. So my mission statement for the work I do is to empower these kids, to resource them, and most importantly to believe in them, because if you believe in people, and particularly young people, they can become enormous forces.

There's a whole range of projects that we have done at Bentleigh and the photos on the screen show one of them. We had this space available – just asphalt and concrete. So we dug it up and developed it into a wetland area. I approached the Urban Stormwater Authority and told them we wanted to treat our stormwater. They came up with a Memorandum of Agreement offering us \$75,000, provided we matched them dollar for dollar. We found the money in the College budget so then thought we had \$150,000 to create something where there was no natural watercourse. We built a learning centre there, and we engaged some ecological engineers to do the hydrology and create a flow where flow wasn't happening. It was flat land, so we had to do some creative digging. But then the Stormwater Authority came back to us and told us that because of funding constraints our promised funds were no longer available.

So I dug out my trusty Nikon camera and went looking for building sites. I found a whole bunch of them and photographed them with no identifying landmarks in the background. My pictures showed ditches and drains and machinery but you couldn't tell where they were taken. Then on the day before Christmas Eve I went into the Urban Stormwater office with my pictures all blown up into huge photographs and said: "How can you stop us now! Look at what we've done!" At this stage we hadn't even turned a sod, but it was just before Christmas and there was no way they were going to come out and have a look for themselves. But we had everything lined up to go and all we needed was the money. And we got it. We got away with it and the Minister came out in February to have a look, and by then lots had been done and it was all there in place. We wanted to create an area that provided habitat and also improved the water quality of what we were discharging. We also wanted an outdoor classroom where students could go with their teachers and do stuff that they couldn't do anywhere else.

This outdoor centre is used for all sorts of classes, and we even invited kids from the local pre-school centre to come along with their parents. So we had a day with these kids and their mums and dads. Terry the Tortoise lived in the pool, so he was fished out and the kids enjoyed his company. They put nets in the water and found mudeyes and all sorts of other creatures, and these little 4 and 5 year olds had their magnifiers up to their eyes looking at the wildlife from our learning centre. One little five-year-old said to me, "I can't see where you put the batteries in Terry". These kids had had no contact with the natural world, and if it moved then it needed batteries, otherwise how do you turn Terry on and off?

We use computers to monitor the water quality. When we started the water coming out of our system was worse than the water going in, because squadrons of ducks had arrived and we hadn't established sufficient vegetation to cope with them crapping in the water. But once the plants came up the water quality improved enormously. Then the crows came too, and I was out there with a slingshot trying to keep the crows at bay. The crows would swoop and pick up a duckling and eat it, and our little Year 7 kids would be bawling their eyeballs out.

We try to connect our kids to the natural world. They can't learn to save it unless they first learn to love it. And they won't learn to love it until we get them out there to see it. So here in Bentleigh, in the middle of all those cream brick veneer houses, we have created some very unusual spaces. Our wetland area traps and treats 6,000,000 Litres of water each year. We harvest it and store it and then pump it 500 metres to our soccer ground. We don't lose any through evaporation because it's all underground. And the soccer pitch stays soft all year round and is safe for kids to play on.

The journey on this project is continuing, and part of that journey is a meditation and indigenous culture centre that we had built within the wetlands. These wetlands have now been officially recognised by indigenous elders who have given it a name. We wanted to build a space that would act as a well-being area for kids; a place where they could step back and have a more reasoned approach to their life in general and their studies in particular. The initial plan was to spend \$300 at Bunnings and buy a gazebo, but then we thought we could do better so decided to hit the community. We approached an architectural firm and said to them, "Will you do us a pro bono design?" And they said, "Why not? We've got a young architect here who is keen and talented. It would be great to give it to him to see what he can come up with."

I wanted to include a fishing aspect in all this, so I included a billabong where we could place some endangered species. We thought we might start with species like the barred galaxiid, and if that failed then it's cod and yellowbelly. There will certainly be some native fish. We had also approached a firm called Design Constructions who do major building projects in the \$30 - \$50 million range, so they are serious players in the building industry. They agreed to build our project for the cost of the workers' wages only. The original cost was estimated at \$330,000 but it will now be completed for about \$140,000. It is made of timber and is a truly remarkable building.

Our billabong will hold about 200,000 Litres of water and will be about 3 metres deep at the deepest point. We needed to include a concrete liner so that the water would stay clear so the kids will be able to see the fish.

We purchased a wind turbine to power the facility, and it is quite a unique design. Most turbines have two or three blades that turn a drive shaft that turns a gearbox that turns a generator, so energy is lost at each of these stages. The wind turbine that we purchased has magnets impregnated in the wind vanes. There is no driveshaft or gearbox so it is much more efficient. It looks like a huge bicycle wheel and we parked it for a short time in the library. The kids kept asking me what it was, and I said it was the front wheel of a very large bicycle, and once we got the rest we'd be able to transport whole classes on it. It was eventually put up on the roof of their learning centre where it now provides electricity for the centre.



*Bill's wind turbine – and not a large bicycle wheel*

We wanted to create another part of the school that would minimize our impact and our emissions, so we decided to build an urban forest that would reduce our carbon footprint and which again could be used as an outdoor classroom. So we hit the Commonwealth Bank and said to them, “We bank with you and we really need you to be part of this project,” so they gave us half the money for the plants we needed. We left some established trees there and sank 1800 holes, then ordered the plants. On planting day some 80 people turned up to help. There were kids everywhere and we were pulling babies out of holes so we could put trees in them. And already there are Tawny Frogmouths and other birds and animals in our little forest.

Our solar energy project was interesting. In early 2007 I told the Principal that we needed to install something that was big so we could really crow about it, and for this we needed about \$50,000. I then discovered that the maximum rebate we could get was \$4,000, so we lobbied the Government. I went to John Thwaites’s office and told his team that I had four television crews coming to our school to see how we’d spent \$50,000 on solar energy. I said I would be happy to tell them that the Government had helped us out and it was fantastic that the Government helped schools in this way.



*Those magnificent solar panels*

But I was equally happy to tell the television crews that we had to do it all ourselves because the Government was too stingy to help us. “So how do you want to play it?” They asked for a week to consider their response and then came back with \$5 million – \$10,000 per school for about 400 schools over five years. We told them that this wasn’t enough for us to install something that would make a difference, so they came back to us with another \$2.5 million. It became the ‘Schools’ Solar Energy Program’. We were given \$18,000 and were invited to be the ‘launch school’, with the proviso the system was in place and live on the Internet within eight days. I approached our installer and he said he could do it in six days, and he did. Eight days later the Pollies arrived for the launch, and the television crews were there doing their thing. Thwaites was the Acting Premier at this time because Premier Steve Bracks was overseas, and due to arrive back home on the ninth day - in which case he would have cut the ribbon instead of Thwaites.

We monitor how much electricity we use, and schools are heavy users of electricity. Our monitoring screens show how much electricity we use each day on the various activities around the school, and kids start to learn the importance of these things. They learned, for example, that cold sunny days in winter are the best days for producing electricity from solar cells, and not the hot days of summer.

Water has been the big one. Each year our water supply company used to send me fantastic invitations for lunch at Caulfield Racetrack. At the second of these functions I asked one of the other punters why we were there, and he said that we were their best clients, as we were using 14,000,000 Litres of water a year. We wanted to reduce it, so we introduced the school’s water efficiency program by putting flow restriction devices on all our taps and by

using waterless urinals. This reduced our water use by 25%, but the water company assured me I was still on their invite list for the following year's dinner. In return I assured them we were going to do better with our water saving.

Tanks and toilet flushing was an obvious way to go, so we put an underground 50,000 Litre tank in to flush toilets. But we were still one of South-East Waters' favourite clients, so we figured we had a leak somewhere. We purchased a system for monitoring our water use and figured that if we monitored our use between midnight and 3am then a reading would indicate that we had a leak. We did, and finally tracked the leak down to a toilet with a stuck button. We had another issue when some plumbers came one Saturday to do some work and broke a pipe, so they switched off all the water. But we have Saturday morning classes, and when some of the kids went to the toilet to wash their hands they turned on tap after tap trying to find one that worked. They complained to their teachers who then found some water for them. But of course all those taps were still on, and when the plumbers finished at 2 o'clock and turned the water back on, they were running hard. We didn't discover this until Monday morning when the water had flooded the entire performing arts centre and was pouring out into the street. Then the plumbers put in their bill for their repairs and a very interesting discussion ensued.

We now have 2,000 people using the school's grounds and facilities out of school time, yet we've still managed to get our water savings as high as 93% and have saved \$40,000 on our water bills in the process.

We established a vegetable garden in an area of the school that wasn't being used, and made garden beds from planks constructed from old toner cartridges. The kids planted their veggies and the gardens were watered from water harvested from the roof. We had a parent who could grow veggies on a concrete path because he knows everything there is to know about growing vegetables, and he helped. So the kids grow some great veggies and take them home. Connecting kids with food sources is something I'm very passionate about because once we forget where our food comes from and think it comes from supermarkets our environment is in danger.

Last October I went to Germany to talk about the work that we were involved here in Melbourne, and I had just arrived home and was quite jetlagged when I received an email from London saying we were finalists in the International Green Awards for the most sustainable education institution – a worldwide event. I asked my boss what she wanted me to do, and she said I should go straight back again. So three of us went back to England, and our school won.

The Churchill Fellowship sees me leaving on April 27 to view sustainable practices in schools around Scandinavia and Finland. These places have more severe environmental conditions than what we have here, so their solutions need to be more innovative. In Sweden, for example, it's mandated that they have to harvest urine. Trucks come to each house and collect the urine from 2,000 Litre underground tanks, which is then converted to fertiliser for farming practices.

Let me say, I have discovered that publicity for the school is good, because it allows us to connect with community groups in all sorts of ways.

So that's our story.

# President's Message

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The first thing I would do is thank Bill Thomas, one of our members, for a most interesting presentation he delivered at our General Meeting on Thursday, March 21. You will find a detailed report on his presentation elsewhere in this newsletter. Secondly, I would like to draw the attention of all VFFA members to a report released by the Victorian Auditor General on Wednesday, March 20, titled "Management of Freshwater Fisheries" in regard to the Department of Primary Industries' handling of our State's Freshwater Fisheries. I believe that the summary statement released by the Auditor General is of such importance to our Association that I have chosen to include it in this month's message exactly as it appears on the Auditor General's Office website.



I quote: "The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) is not discharging its legislative responsibilities to deliver balanced and sustainable outcomes for freshwater recreational fisheries. While it is demonstrably delivering improved recreational freshwater fishing outcomes, it is not paying sufficient attention to the protection and conservation of ecological processes, habitats and supporting ecosystems in these fisheries.

DPI's reporting of performance in managing recreational freshwater fisheries is output focused and not comprehensive. It offers little insight into the impact of its activities in managing risks and achieving balanced sustainable outcomes for recreational freshwater fisheries.

In a comprehensive internal review in 2010, DPI identified a range of planning and management issues associated with its current approach to fisheries management. This resulted in the development of a draft fisheries statement that identified the key steps and actions for the improved planning and management of fisheries. While the draft statement addresses the key principles for ecologically and sustainably managed fisheries, the proposed steps and actions are to be implemented only across select commercial and high-risk fisheries.

Consequently, recreational freshwater fisheries will continue to not be managed in the most efficient and effective way to protect fishery resources and habitats for future generations."

The full report is available at [www.audit.vic.gov.au](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au) and I recommend that it be read in detail. Once you have read the report, I would further recommend that you contact the Minister responsible for the Department of Primary Industries seeking answers to any questions that your reading of the report raises in your mind. Asking a question of the Minister, rather than just making a statement in regard to the report, obliges him to provide you with an answer.

The Minister's contact details are as follows:

The Hon. Peter Walsh MLA  
Minister for Agriculture & Food Security  
Minister for Water  
Parliament House  
Spring Street, Melbourne. VIC. 3002  
Email: [peter.walsh@parliament.vic.gov.au](mailto:peter.walsh@parliament.vic.gov.au)  
Website: [www.peterwalsh.org.au](http://www.peterwalsh.org.au)

I urge as many members as possible to make contact with the Minister, firstly to express their concern over the obvious lack of action in regard to the proper management of our Freshwater Fisheries, and secondly, to ask what are the plans to dramatically improve the situation.

Best wishes, *Terry Rogers* (President)

## Big VFFA Cane Day - Sunday June 16

Members are reminded that our annual Cane Day is on-  
**Sunday, June 16, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm**

At the Red Tag Pool, Yarrabend Park, Fairfield  
(Melway's reference 2D H2)

The VFFA will provide BBQ lunch and refreshments. Rod Makers will be in attendance, along with a cast of thousands.

So come along and cast with the new rods and compare them with the gems of the past. Unwrap your dear old friend and bring it along to meet the new boys on the block.

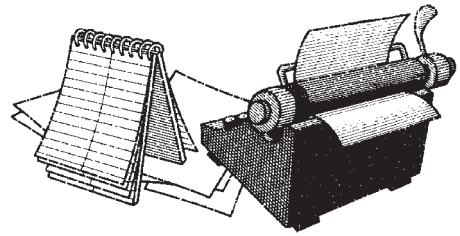


### “IT’S ALL ABOUT THE CANE”

Red Tag Pool is an all weather venue,  
so bring along a raincoat in case the weather is damp.

For all details please contact Bernard Holbery on 0432 023 502 or  
email [rlozupone@bigpond.com](mailto:rlozupone@bigpond.com)

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



“My heart lives in New York, where I was born and raised. My body lives in Los Angeles, where I do much of my work. My soul lives in Montana, where I fish. I am most at peace on a river in Montana. When I return home from Montana I miss the river: the tranquillity, the peace, the refurbishing of the soul that only happens there for me. Here’s hoping you have a similar place you can’t wait to visit and never want to leave. If you don’t have your own Montana, I urge you to find one.”

These words are from Henry Winkler, a fanatical fly-fisher who is perhaps best known as *The Fonz* in that hugely popular sitcom *Happy Days*.

I suspect that ‘Montana’ for many of our Victorian VFFA members are the lakes and rivers of Tasmania. And why not – the Apple Isle provides a world-class fishery that many of us have grown to love. But how is it faring these days?

Some weeks ago I received an email with a letter attached. The letter was written by Jim Allen and addressed to Mike Stevens (publisher of the *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating News*), and it outlined a number of concerns Jim had with Tasmania’s trout fishery. Jim’s letter was doing the rounds, and many who received it believed it was a comment on the current situation. But it wasn’t – it was written in 1999 and published in the *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating News* that year. Jim, an acknowledged authority on the Tasmanian trout fishery, was somewhat bemused to find that his 14 year old letter had been resurrected and distributed, and he agreed to provide an update on the Tassie fishery as he finds it now. His update, along with some excerpts from his original letter, are included in this newsletter. Jim makes some criticisms of the ‘bureaucracy’ (including the Inland Fisheries Service), so it was only fair that John Diggle, CEO of the IFS, be invited to respond. John phoned and indicated that he felt that many of Jim’s comments were justified and that the IFS needs to find better ways of communicating with the angling public.

I personally fish Tassie as often as I can (which is nowhere near as often as I’d like), and I love the fishing there. But from all reports it has been tough in recent times. VFFA members returning home complain of rivers with quite depleted trout numbers (for which the recent cormorant plague is blamed) and patchy fishing in the Highlands. Part of the problem is that the fishery is the victim of its reputation. It has been written up in countless books and magazine articles as a fabulous trout fishery, and it is. So each summer Tasmania is invaded by armies of mainland anglers, all keen to sample for themselves those highly publicized lakes and rivers. Jim Blakeslee’s report in this issue describes the result – given a blue sky day the near Western Lakes are all choked with cars.

And how is the Inland Fisheries Service faring? It has certainly done some great work in recent years to promote and improve the fishery. The carp invasion of Lakes Sorell and

Crescent required a massive eradication program over a number of years and this has been largely successful. The Service has also been hard at work improving access for anglers to many of the important Tasmanian rivers, and has also provided stiles, maps, and heaps of helpful information. It runs an extensive stocking program to monitor and maintain fish stocks in lakes and reservoirs right across the State.

Greg French, a well-known Tasmanian angling writer, describes the IFS staff as ‘accessible, approachable, professional, honest and always willing to supply data’, and he suggests that the IFS has been ‘too modest about its considerable successes’. He affirms that the primary role of the IFS ‘is to promote and foster Tasmania’s trout fishery’. That’s a very demanding charter given the competing and sometimes conflicting demands of the various angler groups and other stakeholders, the increasing pressure now coming from the ‘greens’, and uncontrollable factors such as Tasmania’s weather and climate, and those pestiferous cormorant invasions. And rumours abound that the State Government funding provided to the IFS is paltry. One recent correspondent suggested that more Government funds are given to the Hobart Botanical Gardens than to the IFS.

Despite the difficulties the IFS continues its work, and perhaps Jim’s letter will result in some answers to the questions he raises and perhaps an even better Tassie trout fishery. We hope so, as Tasmania is a wonderful place to visit and the trout fishing, at its best, is simply magnificent.

*Lyndon Webb*

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## **Australian Fly Fishing Museum Opening**

The Australian Fly Fishing Museum Committee invites you to the official opening of the Museum & Dinner at Clarendon, with Tamie Fraser:

Friday, May 3, 2013 commencing at 7 pm

At Clarendon - 234 Clarendon Station Road, Nile via Evandale

Dress: Black tie

Ticket: \$200 per person

RSVP promptly: call 6344 6233; or PO Box 711, Launceston, Tasmania 7250

## An Elder Statesman – Andrew Mossman – Part 2

*In the March newsletter Dermot O'Brien spoke with Andrew Mossman, a fly-fisherman of more than 40 years. Andrew has fished in many parts of the world and is known as an exceptional fly tier.*

### 1 Are you a River or Lake Man?

To be a little flippant the obvious answer to this question is yes! However if I were forced to choose between rivers and lakes I would choose rivers. To sneak along a spring creek or to stand in the Mataura, the Aparima River or the Henrys Fork of the Snake, or any similar large river, surrounded by rising fish, or to wade quietly up any number of Victoria's broken rivers is sheer bliss.

I have had some wonderful fishing in lakes, where the fish are every bit as difficult to catch as selective risers in rivers, and where specialised flies are required. How often have I cast fly after fly to rising fish in Little Pine or Penstock Lagoon, not to mention Arthurs, to be rejected time after time, and despite good presentations have only caught an odd fish and had masses of short rises and 'boofs'? The answer is, of course, more often than I have had good days. But it was these days that taught me, or should I say forced me back to my fly tying desk, where I tried to come up with flies that were more effective. Really it was no different to what happened on my beloved rivers.

In my experience I think that river fish seem to rise more freely and more predictably than lake fish. Another important difference is that in a river it is possible to keep fishing to rising fish, changing flies and trying out your latest theories for some time. Provided you don't spook the fish they will often keep rising. In lakes, on the other hand, rising fish are normally cruising around seeking food and often they only give you one or two opportunities to cover them.

Another of the great joys of lake fishing is polaroiding. To quietly wade through or walk around the shore of a lake in Tasmania and see cruising fish, present a fly to them, and then watch them slowly swim over to the fly, look at it, and then take it is magic. It is rather less predictable than fishing for river fish, but wonderful nevertheless.

So, yes if I had to choose it would be rivers, but luckily I don't have to.

### 2 What is your favourite destination?

The fishing that I find most challenging and most rewarding is fishing to rising fish that are selectively feeding on insects, usually mayflies. These fish are sometimes easy, but usually not. I enjoy the challenge of not only the fishing, but also that of developing flies that are more effective.

There were several rivers in Victoria and NSW that provided this type of fishing. They were the Lower Goulburn at the Breakaway and at Gilmore's Bridge, the Little Plains and the Delegate Rivers and their tributaries, the



*Andrew fishing the Test River at Stockbridge*

Murrumbidgee above and below Lake Tantangara, the rivers around Nimmitabel, especially the Maclaughlin, and of course the Mitta Mitta River near Mitta Mitta. In good conditions these rivers all provided extensive hatches and challenging fishing. For whatever reasons these rivers no longer provide the fishing they once did, and in any view they are often crowded.

There are a number of rivers in New Zealand that still enjoy substantial hatches of mayflies and provide wonderful, but often challenging fishing. The ones that I know best are the Mataura, the Aparima and the Oreti rivers. There are many smaller rivers in Southland that also provide this kind of fishing and I fish many of them often. The one that I know best is the Mataura, and I guess if I have to choose one only, it would be my favourite New Zealand river.

Towards the end of most seasons I get an irresistible urge to fish a Victorian north-eastern river and I usually end up at Mitta Mitta. There I fish all the local streams, but have a real love for the Snowy Creek. I fished it first in 1962 with my dad and Grant Petch. The fishing was rarely excellent; half a dozen fish up to 12 or 13 inches would be a good day, but it takes me back to my youth and I just love it.



*Lake Pedder - 1978*

### **3 Does the array of gear available today help or hinder?**

When I first started fly-fishing as a kid the first fly rod that I used was my Dad's. It had a Red Gum butt, a middle section of greenheart, and the top piece was split cane and horribly bent. It was heavy and terribly out of balance, but a fly rod nevertheless.

As I have already said, for my 10th or 11th Christmas I was given a three piece split cane fly rod blank, which we made up. Like the first rod that I used, this rod was heavy and out of balance, but a little better than Dad's rod. Despite all this I loved my first fly rod, learned to cast with it and started catching fish. I then moved on to Turville's cane blanks and over the years made many rods. I had just read Charles Ritz's book, so modified the blanks to give them a parabolic-like action. These were wonderful rods and I used them for years. Normally the tip would only last for one season so every winter I would make up a new tip or two.

Fibreglass then arrived and that was another leap forward, so I made and purchased a number of those rods. Now we have carbon fibre rods and these are an even greater leap forward in performance. I started with Diawa's and other cheaper makes, and despite their lack of pedigree they were excellent. I have now settled on Sage XP's and find that they are just wonderful. Apart from an occasional sentimental trip back into cane I will stick with carbon fibre until something better comes along.

I give you this little story to illustrate my belief that evolving gear has always been a feature of our sport and probably always will be. Therefore to answer the question specifically, I

believe that most of the wonderful gear that is now available must by definition only help or improve our sport. It is up to the fly-fisher himself to choose what he wants from this vast arsenal.

#### 4 What are your favourite flies?



*Andrew – a master fly tier*

As you might have already gathered I am fascinated, or if you prefer obsessed, with flies and their development. By the application of painful discipline I have reduced the number of fly boxes that I normally carry to six. So to ask me for my favourite fly patterns presents me with difficulties. In fact I think it is a mistake to have favourites and in any case it depends where one fishes. Normally I take different fly boxes to different locations.

At any stage in a day's fishing, unless every feeding fish rises to and is hooked by your well-presented fly, all else being equal there will always be a better fly. This philosophy drives my fishing and although I often fail to practice it through laziness or whatever, I passionately believe it to be true.

The flies I mostly use are:

For north east Victoria - a few dun patterns, mostly grey or ginger and a couple of Kossie Duns and emergers; Greenwell's Glories sizes 14 & 16, tied with the correct hackles; my caddis pattern; Dr Wark's; a couple of grasshopper and beetle patterns; my parachute termite; red and black spinners, both standard and parachute hackle; and my favourite seal's fur nymph tied with a mixture of green and black seal's fur.

For Ballarat – I take emergers, and duns and spinners similar to my New Zealand flies but much larger of course, and tied to represent the Red Spinner mayfly that hatches there.

For Tasmania - similar flies to Ballarat, but some a little larger. I tie a series of emergers, duns and spinners using CDC, possum fur and rooster hackles. I also take my seal's fur nymph, and a damsel fly nymph that I tie that uses thick nylon line melted to form eyes. This is not one of my patterns.

For New Zealand - CDC and possum emergers, my natural Quill Dun, Blue Duns, Gold Ribbed Hare's Ear, Deleatidium Dun - all in sizes 14 to 19 but mostly 16 and 17. Pheasant Tail and Hare's Ear nymphs, and caddis grubs and a collection of spinners tied with both standard and parachute hackles, including Hubert's Mataura Spinner. I also use a caddis that I tie in sizes 14, 16 and 17, and in February I would use Cicadas from time to time. For New Zealand it is essential to not overdress your flies, and this is critical for all spinner patterns.

When all else fails and the fish are not rising I use a number of soft hackle flies -spiders, fished down and across in the normal way. The spiders that I use mostly are Starling and



*A familiar sight – another fine brown taken by Andrew*

Claret (in dull weather), and Partridge and Yellow, or Ginger, or Green, and sometimes Claret. I use these spiders mostly in New Zealand but also occasionally in the north-east of Victoria, but only in rivers.

In the 55 years that I have been interested in fly tying there has been a steady improvement in tying materials and in fly design. Some of the newer materials used today are: closed cell foam for beetle wing cases and grasshopper bodies, synthetic materials for dubbing fur, wings, tail fibres and parachute posts, and also the use of natural furs like possum and CDC feathers. These have revolutionised fly tying. But although I use many of these new synthetic materials the majority of my flies are still tied with natural fibres. For example I still use seal's fur extensively and also quill fibres and hackle points for wings. The development of the new so-called "genetic" hackles has also made a huge contribution to fly tying, and finally the variety and quality of hooks that are available today has contributed materially to fly tying.

Improvements in fly design I think have been even more significant to our sport than the new materials. The extensive use of parachute hackles and the multitude of emerger and spinner patterns that we use today are good examples. Only some of these developments have been made possible by these new materials.

Elegance in flies is pre-eminently important, and this is especially so when trying to "match the hatch". When tying, only use the best materials and do not overdress your flies. Of course I use many more flies than those listed above, but these are the ones that I use most.

## 5 What has been the Greatest Influence on you over the Years?

I was introduced to fishing by my Dad at a very early age, and although Dad had done some fly-fishing with his uncle in the Rubicon in the 1920's he had not fly-fished since then. In fly-fishing therefore we were effectively both novices. The real significance of this is that, unlike, say, John Brookes, who had Malcolm Gillies as his mentor, I had to learn the hard way, that is, without a mentor. There was of course nothing unusual about this and in fact I think in those days it was probably the norm, but it did mean that we floundered around a bit and it took much longer to learn the basics than we might otherwise have done.



*Andrew fished the Test in 1975*

I purchased and read every book on fly-fishing that I could get my hands on, and in those early years I started with Wackett's little book *My Hobby is Fly Fishing*, and then books by Sawyer, McCausland, Patterson, Skues, Dunne, Stewart, Walton, Wackett, Scholes, Wigram, Halford, Grey, Hills and Ronalds, and in approximately that order. As you can see I had read many of the classics, and all by the time I was 20. My passion was clearly well developed, and I reread many of these books several times and tried to follow their instructions. In 1958, when I was only 15, I had purchased a copy of Veniard and was trying to teach myself fly tying.

Along the way I did meet characters like Jack Chisler of Jamieson, who encouraged me to take up fly tying when I was 14, and I met Roy Kirk at about that time also, whose fly boxes mightily impressed me, but I knew no one who was a competent fly-fisherman with whom I could talk and be advised by.

So clearly my reading was the major influence on my development as a fly-fisher.

## 6 What advice would you give to a Fly-Fisher?

It is a compliment to be asked for advice and if the request is a serious one and especially from an inexperienced fisher I always try to respond helpfully. I well remember struggling for information in those early days myself and I always appreciated any help I was given. Oh, and by the way I still do! In relation to what advice I would give would depend on what help was sought. Normally such requests quickly become discussions and the experience and enthusiasm of the person seeking help quickly becomes obvious.

As general background all first class fly-fishermen that I have met have loads of passion, some obsession, and an insatiable lust for fishing. If I sense there is any of this passion in an inexperienced fisher then I would reinforce it all and explain the need to be a hunter. Discussions about tackle and tactics usually ensue and are pretty straight forward.

If the request came from an experienced fly-fisher my approach would be much the same, provided of course he was a 'good chap' and I liked him. Normally such requests quickly become pleasant discussions from which I would expect that both of us might benefit. I would happily give any advice that I believed was genuinely requested.

## 7 Who, whether alive or dead, would you like to spend a day fishing with?

Having read the vast majority of serious books on fly-fishing there are quite a number of well known fly-fishermen that I would love to spend a day with. It is very difficult to decide on one only.

Amongst the old English and Scottish masters are Skues, Hills, Halford, Sawyer, Stewart, and more latterly Goddard and Clarke. The thought of a day discussing flies with Halford would be wonderful, even if a little pompous maybe? I think on balance though, a day with Skues would be the most interesting. But upon reflection, would it be a day with today's knowledge or the knowledge that existed in his time? Both situations would be fascinating.

In the American stable there are masses of interesting and first-class fly-fishermen, and far too many to name. A few who especially interest me are Koch, LaFontaine, Marinaro, Miller, Proper, Richards, Swisher, Whitlock, Wulff and more latterly Lawson.

A day with Marinaro on his beloved Letort River would be fascinating, but he has a reputation for being grumpy, which might spoil things a bit. On balance a day with Datus Proper, author of *What the Trout Said*, would be wonderful. Marinaro was his mentor and his contribution to fly design in his book was innovative. Or a day on the midge with Ed Koch would be pretty exciting also. In reality a day with almost any of them would be memorable

Back home, I had an evening's fishing on the Lake River opposite Woolmers with Dick Wigram in 1969. Dick was well past his best, suffering from advanced emphysema, but the evening was special to me.

So if it has to be one only, then Skues would be my choice, and in reality probably as much for his historical significance and contribution to our sport as to the discussions we might have on his fishing techniques.

## **8 What is your view on false casting?**

I almost never false cast. The exceptions are when starting from scratch I strip off some line and make one, or sometimes two, false casts to get it out. When trying to dry a fly that has become sodden I might flick it a couple of times trying to dry it, and sometimes in heavy wind it is necessary to false cast more often.

When fishing upstream in a river I cast up and strip line back to keep in touch with my fly. When the drift has finished I roll cast the line off the water, shooting a little line forward, but a bit to one side of any fish that might be rising. I shoot more line out on my back cast and then cast forward shooting a little more, if required. I normally aim my fly just above the water, then stop the forward movement thereby trying to drop the fly and line gently on to the water.

I use exactly the same technique when fishing lakes and rivers down stream. I always start my cast with a roll cast which lifts my line off the water cleanly and quietly and as in rivers just lay it out on the next forward cast.

## **9 If you were starting out again what would you do differently?**

I have always believed that people who respond to this question with the answer 'nothing' are slow learners. But, in my case what could I do differently? I could hardly have had more passion or enthusiasm without interfering with my studies and therefore my career. I could not really have started much earlier, although perhaps I could have become a purist a couple of years sooner. I suppose I could choose wealthy parents and enjoy fishing in more exciting

places, like the Shannon River before the famous Rise finished, like John Brookes did. But it would be rather difficult to find a Dad who encouraged me more than mine did.

So I suppose therefore the only thing that I could do better if I had my time again would be to concentrate more. My ability to concentrate on my fly is now much better than it was then, so that would be an improvement. As well it would be nice to have a mentor, say like Malcolm Gillies, but then would we value as much our progress so hardly won? It was fun learning the hard way and on reflection I don't think I would change much.

### **10 When did you join the VFFA?**

I became a member of the VFFA in 1969, so have enjoyed 44 years of membership of this fine Association. And I look forward to many more years of membership, too.

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## **Jim Allen on the Tasmanian Trout Fishery**

In 1999 Jim Allen wrote to Mike Stevens, expressing concern at the state of Tasmania's trout fishery. His letter was published in the February-March issue of the *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating News* of that year. In recent days Jim has updated his assessment. Excerpts of his 1999 letter and his complete update are given here:



### **Jim's 1999 Letter:**

Dear Mike,

I take this opportunity to give you my thoughts on what I believe is a declining Tasmanian trout fishery. The first time I fished in Tasmania with a fly rod was as a teenage boy at Lake St Clair, when I didn't even know that you had to strike when a fish ate your fly. That was in 1961. I have been regularly fishing Tasmania since the early 1970s and in the last few years there has been a dramatic change in Tasmania's trout fishery, and there are some major problems.

When I regularly came down in the 1970s lakes like Sorell were in great condition. Wood's Lake was a good fishery, Penstock Lagoon was one of the most magnificent trout fisheries of all time, and the Lagoon of Islands had legendary mayfly hatches. You could polaroid Penstock's shores in November-December and chase mudeye feeders all day. You could spend hours catching some of the most magnificent brown trout in gin-clear waters. Today Penstock is lost, as is Lake Sorrell, which is also one of the great trout fisheries of the world. My diary records catches of 10, 12, 14 fish day after day, and sometimes 20 and even 25 or 30 trout caught at daybreak on the midges. Sadly, no longer.

Shannon Lagoon is another water that has been neglected. Its restoration has been a favourite proposal of mine and, as President of the Australian Trout Foundation, I am extremely disappointed to see nothing happening to restore it.

The biggest worry this year is Little Pine Lagoon. What's happened to Little Pine Lagoon? No-one can answer the questions, but something is dramatically wrong. Years ago it didn't matter what wind blew on Little Pine Lagoon - it took only the fiercest storm to make it dirty.

Now with a traditional northerly wind, which we get with nearly every weather pattern, parts of Little Pine end up turbid and filthy. I can go on and on about what's wrong with the trout fishery in Tasmania. It sounds very negative, but I am worried. I am worried because Tasmania spends a lot of money advertising it as the best wild brown trout fishery in the world - and we are rapidly losing it.

In the Western Lakes I see another dramatic change. Years ago, Lake Ada was a clearwater lake, even in a big northerly wind. Now it only needs 20 knots of northerly and it is milky. The same applies to Double Lagoon. I believe Double Lagoon, First Lagoon, O'Dells, and especially Howes Lagoon need wading restrictions. We fly-fishers are doing damage to our ancient sediments and as much as Jim Allen loves to wade and polaroid through the Western Lakes, we have to consider wading restrictions and we have to consider them sooner rather than later.

We have enormous potential problems in our Western Lakes and I take this opportunity to outline a few of them. Years ago Botsford was full of five, six or seven pound fish and my diary accurately recorded the weights of fish caught there through the seventies. Today if you were to fish Botsford, it is most unlikely that you would catch a fish over four pounds. Most of the fish are between two and three pounds and that is a result, I believe, of overstocking and more trout eating the available food supply. The harvesting by tourist anglers isn't occurring because they put their fish back. I think Jason Garrett wrote an article recently and commented that Americans put a 100% of their fish back, mainlanders put 50% of their fish back, and Tasmanians keep 100% of the fish they catch. Well, I think he may have been a little harsh, but he wasn't far from the truth.

But the times are changing. There are more and more recreational anglers coming to Tasmania each year. The Highlands are full of Victorians. The lodges, hotels and camping grounds are filling up through January and February with basically New South Wales and Victorian anglers. Now Tasmania needs to keep that economic benefit; perhaps even needs to expand it. It can do so - but it can't do so unless it is prepared to invest some time and serious investigation to evaluate its fishery.

In Canada and in Alaska the government fishery managers worked very hard to improve their sport fisheries, and I think they are leaders in treating recreational fishing as a tourism asset. In both those places foreign anglers pay a serious premium for the right to fish, and I believe there is nothing the matter with that. An interstate angler spends up to \$2,000 - \$3,000 to spend time fishing in Tasmania, and many hire a trout guide as well, so they spend a lot of money. I can't see any reason why they shouldn't pay an out of state premium to fish Tasmania's trout fishery. The Tasmanian tourism authorities will see it as an impediment because of the higher expense, but it is a very small sum in regard to the total trip cost.

I fish the Dean River in British Columbia in Canada each year. The licence for a foreigner, like me, is \$145 Australian for the privilege of fishing for 7 days on what is arguably the best sea run rainbow stream in the world. The other thing we ought to consider is endorsing our fisheries so that if we have, say, a 'Western Lakes' endorsement on our licence, the money raised can go into research on the Western Lakes. There are revenue-raising opportunities that have not been looked at by endorsing licences.

The real question we must consider is this - what is best for the future? We don't own Tasmania. We have an obligation to hand over to our children and our grandchildren a better trout fishery - not a worse trout fishery. There may have to be some very difficult decisions

made if we are going to protect our environment. When we lose our trout, we lose a lot more. We lose clean waters. We are destroying habitat. We are destroying quality of water and that's not our right. Government - our bureaucrats, both in the Department of the Environment and in Fisheries, need to look at what they are up to. They are failing us badly and we are just letting our trout fishery slide into oblivion and no-one is caring, and that really hurts me personally.

I know things can be repaired. Habitats can be improved. Lets have no more discussion papers, management strategies, conclaves, meetings, studies, seminars or investigations. Let's have some decisions. If the Thames River in London can be rehabilitated so that salmon can run back up it from the sea, we can certainly fix up Lake Sorrell, Lagoon of Islands, Shannon Lagoon, Woods Lake, Little Pine and Penstock Lagoon. What we need is determination, courage and conviction.

*Jim Allen*

(So that's what Jim had to say in 1999. What's changed? How does he see it now? Here is his assessment of Tasmania trout fishing in 2013)

### **Tasmania's Trout Fishery ... 14 Years On**

A letter I sent to Mike Stevens, editor of *Tasmanian Fishing and Boating News* in 1999 has been recently "doing the rounds" or in modern parlance "gone viral" via the internet. Many believe I wrote it recently. Not so.

After reviewing the original I feel much of what I wrote is still relevant today, and I suspect one of the reasons my earlier letter is getting promotion is that many anglers today are worried about the future of the trout fishery of Tasmania. We have "lost" many wonderful trout waters, as I highlighted back then, and still today I think we should know a lot more from our fisheries and water managers about what is wrong with the quality of the water in many of our lakes in Tasmania. Whilst I have some suspicions, I don't profess to be an expert. I doubt that it is rocket science either! I feel that serious anglers have been kept in the dark like mushrooms and fed the proverbial dung! I think we have a right to know.

In that 1999 letter I made accusations about the arrival of carp in Tasmania. I was clearly wrong in what was then called the 'containment program'. My thoughts were that it was only a matter of time before carp found their way downstream. The IFS understood the urgency and spent an enormous amount of time to eradicate them from both Lake Crescent and Lake Sorell. Today, I sense success and congratulations are due to the team that worked on the carp program. All anglers in Australia are grateful that carp have been contained so far to date in Tasmania, and we can only hope for the final eradication of carp in the future.

However, let me review some of the lakes I mentioned back then and make comment on their condition today.

#### **Penstock Lagoon**

In 1999 I lamented and asked why the Lagoon had lost its superb clear water. I could recollect the wonderful polaroiding around the shores in the 1980s. Well today it has returned to a much better condition with clear water again, most of the time. What happened and why the turnaround? I suspected damage from wading at the time, but looking back I must have been wrong, as there are many more anglers wading Penstock's shores today. There was no logging. Is it better water management?

## **Lake Sorell**

Years ago this lake was the true gem of Tasmania's trout fishery for both trollers and fly-fishers. Whilst never a clear water traditionally, it did have one mysterious year when it was very much clearer than normal and anglers were able to polaroid the sand flats at the south-eastern end. The following year it went horribly dirty. It has never returned to its former glory. Carp turned up in it as well to worsen the situation, and the mayfly all but disappeared. Once there were more than fifty camps along the edges and hundreds of anglers visiting each month. In the past decade it has been all but devoid of anglers. Was it the new era of pivot irrigation and the increased need for water? Was it nitrogen levels from logging operations? We still need to know how we lost such a wonderful trout fishery.

## **Lagoon of Islands**

This was once a great fishery with very large trout and wonderful mayfly hatches. Then the water became stagnant and filthy dirty and we still don't know what really happened to this remarkable fishery. Anglers blamed the Ripple Creek diversion. Was this the reason? We need to know.

## **Arthurs Lakes**

Back in 1999 Arthurs was one of the "jewels in the crown" of fly-fishing in Tasmania. The superb dun hatches, the gin clear polaroiding along the edges, the beetle falls and the midge hatches all contributed to a wonderful trout fishery. A few years ago something went wrong with the water. The duns failed, the water went olive in colour, and instead of fifty or more cars at the boat ramps there were no anglers and no fishery. What caused this? Was it the logging operation on the eastern shore which was very close to the shoreline? Was it a water level problem? I still think we, as anglers, have a right to know. I cannot believe that those in charge of water quality in our lakes either don't know ... or, putting my cynical hat on for a moment, are they too embarrassed to tell us! This year, for the first time in almost a decade, Arthurs looks to be on the improve. This season there is improved water clarity, better dun hatches, and young fish in good condition. We all wait with baited breath for a continuing revival next season. Let's hope!!

## **Little Pine Lagoon**

I commented on the turbidity in 1999; well not much has changed. This year has been the worst year ever for turbidity in my memory of fishing Little Pine since the 1970s. Even after five perfectly calm days there is little improvement in the colour of the water. I thought back then it might have been a disease in the pondweed or perhaps wading damage. I have no idea, but I do remember vividly a beautiful clean lake that didn't get turbid even in the strong northerlies that are common. Today one day of wind and it is like a burnt French onion soup!! I've seen water quality monitors on the lake but haven't ever seen a press release on the findings from them. Again I think anglers have a right to know!

## **The Nineteen Lagoons**

My comments made 14 years ago are, I believe, still relevant today. There is a hugely increased fishing pressure on these waters and I'm pleased to see vastly reduced harvest limits. But as in other parts of the world, as angling pressure increases many new restrictions on wading, boating and access will need to be implemented. Sadly we just can't turn the clock back to the days of unfettered access to these waters.

I well remember in the 1980s taking a Japanese colleague to O'Dell. He could not understand

how we did not see another angler all day. He actually couldn't handle the loneliness and asked to be taken back to civilisation! Sadly it is a very different story today!

### **Shannon Lagoon (Jim Allen's passion!!)**

In 1999 I called for the KISS principle to be applied to restore Shannon Lagoon. It appears to me 14 years later there is still no real determination to do it. There have been many meetings by many stakeholders on the subject – but all to no avail. I heard only recently that the subject is once again on the agenda.

To me it is simple. Drain the Lagoon for a year, though perhaps not all of it to preserve a galaxiid species that seems to be important, so leave ten or twenty acres of water. Two things will happen - either the loose sediments, when dry, will blow back into the bush, or if they have some clay to bind them they will bake hard and dry. Restore the level at the dam end to its original height, which will make the Lagoon about 18 inches deeper. An inspection at the wall shows the watermarks of the previous level. This could be done cheaply as an experiment using red gum sleepers. If successful a more permanent addition to the wall could be considered.

The Lagoon should then be filled to the old level in late winter when the weather warms to promote weed growth. Then we wait to see what happens. I suspect a clear water lake will eventuate with good weed beds. This is what happened to the Cow Paddock arm of Arthurs when it filled after two years of low levels. The old sediments lifted by strong winds caused dust storms. The weed returned in only a few weeks after re-filling.

### **Final Thoughts**

I wrote back in 1999 about the benefits of slot limits to protect spawning-aged trout, as these days I see the average size of trout taken continuing to diminish in size. I think the use of slot limits should be considered. Tasmania's wild trout fishery is unique. Trout came to Tasmania before the advent of genetic dilution in hatcheries, and today Tasmania is the guardian of arguably the best gene pool of wild brown trout in the world. They are not an introduced 'pest' as some green scientists would have us believe. All of us anglers need to fight for better management of our trout fishery.

I also wrote that we have an obligation as a generation of anglers to hand over to our children and grandchildren a better trout fishery than the one we have inherited. With the vastly increased scientific knowledge at our fingertips today we should be able to do this, and in my opinion we are failing miserably.

In conclusion I really doubt that those in power recognise the true value of Tasmania's recreational fisheries to both the community and to the economy. Perhaps one day things will change. I hope so. As a mainlander I'm pleased to see that my earlier 1999 letter has been getting some publicity, and I hope this follow up might be read by someone in Tasmania who can push harder. It is time Tasmanian anglers put pressure on their government departments. After all, the only time pressure doesn't work is when not enough of it is applied!!

*Jim Allen*

March 2013.



# AUSTRALIAN FLY FISHING MUSEUM

## CLARENDON - TASMANIA

### **The Australian Fly Fishing Museum's Mission:**

#### ***To preserve, protect and celebrate the art, the craft and the joy of fly-fishing.***

There is no fly-fishing museum anywhere in the Southern Hemisphere until now. The Australian Fly Fishing Museum opens at Clarendon in Northern Tasmania May 4.

#### ***The Australian Fly Fishing Museum opens on May 4, 2013***

A grand opening dinner is being held on May 3. Tickets are \$200 each. A cocktail party and auction is on May 4. For tickets or enquiries phone the National Trust on 03 6344 6233.

#### ***Why the Museum is at Clarendon***

Clarendon House is one of the most important properties of the National Trust (Tasmania). It was built by James Cox in the 1830s and is an architectural and heritage icon with many unique features. Situated in Tasmania's northern Midlands, a few minutes south of Evandale, the western side of the property is flanked by the South Esk River and across the river can be seen Symmons Plains.

Fly fishing in Australia is predominately fly-fishing for trout and it was James Arndell Youl from across the river at Symmons Plains who was primarily responsible for the successful acclimatisation of trout in the southern hemisphere. Discussions took place with the National Trust's (Tasmania) managing director, Chris Tassell, and accommodation for the museum was suggested in the shepherd's cottage at Clarendon. Clarendon was now to become home for Australia's first fly-fishing museum.

R.H. (Dick) Wigram was, in later life, well known for his fly-fishing writing and commercially tied flies. Dick came to Tasmania in 1921 with his brother John (Jack) and they were direct descendants of Money Wigram who donated space on the ship Norfolk which brought the first trout ova to successfully hatch in Tasmania. Wigram wrote several keenly sought and collectable books on fly fishing and he is just a small part of the history which will be captured at the Australian Fly Fishing Museum.



*Dick Wigram*

#### ***Why the National Trust is involved***

Starting a museum from scratch and trying to ensure all necessary things were covered seemed impossible, but it was realised that the National Trust do all these things, and have successfully done so for many years. After some soul searching it was realised that being part of the National Trust brought huge benefits. The museum was proposed to operate in a similar way to other 'Friends of the National Trust' groups. This gave control to the Australian Fly Fishing Museum committee, but with all the guidance, knowledge and benefits of the National Trust. The Trust covers all the on ground property costs, plus the committee's costs for insurance, financial auditing, stationery, etc, and will provide the committee with its systems and protocols to run the museum. And that's how the Australian Fly Fishing Museum will operate.

A committee was formed and includes: David Grisold, Tony Wright, Jennie Chapman, Michael Youl, Rex Hunt, Chris Tassell, Mike Stevens, Todd Lambert, Janet Lambert, Ron Dennis, Hugh Maltby, Greg Peart, Peter Boag and Stuart Cottrell. The committee has developed a Strategic Plan, Action Plan and a Business Plan, brochures and more.

The Museum through the National Trust has been successful with a \$25,000 grant and more than \$180,000 of private money donated and pledged.

### ***Opening Displays***

The opening displays will be the start of a long-term vision and will show just a small part of Australia's history in regard to fly-fishing. The displays will change regularly and will largely be driven by material available. Two of the displays will include artefacts from R.H. (Dick) Wigram and J.M. (Malcom) Gillies. These were both giants in fly-fishing in Australia.

The museum is starting with a clean slate and this will allow something really special to take place where every display will be planned from the start, rather than put together from a haphazard collection of existing material.

### ***Future Exhibits***

If you have suggestions on exhibits, people, places or events that you think warrant inclusion in displays in the future, please forward them to Mike Stevens [mike@tasfish.com](mailto:mike@tasfish.com) or the Curator, Rhonda Hamilton [Rhonda.Hamilton@nationaltrusttas.org.au](mailto:Rhonda.Hamilton@nationaltrusttas.org.au)

Also, if you have or know of interesting fly fishing material please contact Mike Stevens on 0418 129 949 or [mike@tasfish.com](mailto:mike@tasfish.com) or Jennie Chapman at Clarendon.

### ***Australian Fly Fishing Museum - Foundation Membership***

Contribute \$2,500 to \$50,000 before the museum opens on 4 May 2013 and you or your organisation will become a Foundation Member. Your name, or name of your organisation, will be part of the museum in perpetuity. Your generosity will be permanently acknowledged on a panel on the Foundation Members wall.

### ***Become a Member***

Members will get a regular newsletter and information on what's going on or coming up. You will get free entry to both Clarendon and the Museum on an ongoing basis. Your membership will also help support the Museum. Single membership will be \$30 per year and Family \$50 per year. Go to [www.affm.net.au](http://www.affm.net.au)



*Museum Cottage*

# Report From Way Out West

(Jim Blakeslee tells us about a recent trip to Tasmania)

Bob Loch and I were not overly confident about our fishing prospects for our late summer Tassie trip when we boarded our flight on Wednesday, February 20, as our VFFA Editor had kept me informed about the tough conditions encountered by other VFFA members on recent trips. In spite of the reports of a cormorant infestation on the rivers, low water levels, hot air and water temperatures, and heavy pressure from visiting anglers on the Western Lakes, as well as sparse and irregular hatches at Little Pine, Arthurs and Penstock, we figured we could still get some trout using our usual flies and techniques ... as long as we had some blue sky days and could polaroid the fish.

We collected our rental Subaru from the airport and made tracks for the supermarket where we loaded up with a week's supply of tucker and grog. Then we made the two-hour drive up to Miena. Bob tossed a couple T-bones on the BBQ, and we quaffed a glass or two of red while sorting out some plans for Thursday. The weather was predicted to be warm, with clear skies and a light northerly wind; there was never any doubt about where we were heading the next morning.

We were on the road by 8:30 am and heading up top. But when we got near to the Carter's Lake turnoff we saw a couple cars there already. Further along a half dozen were parked at the Lake Augusta/Little Blue trailhead. Then with Botsford in view, again several cars and half a dozen blokes already wading and flogging the water. Rocky was next - one car there, with a fisherman walking purposefully toward the grassy north shore. Flora and O'Dell, maybe? No way, with three cars parked at the trailhead.

But no-one was parked at the jumping off point for the north-east end of Lake Ada, so that decided our venue for the day. We doped-up with sunscreen, rigged our rods, put on the day-packs with lunch and plenty of drinks aboard, and were off. The lake was the lowest and clearest I had ever seen it, and the sunny, mild conditions were perfect for polaroiding. We walked the first kilometre along the shore to get the sun and breeze behind us before moving out into a foot of water to look for targets. With no bug life to be seen in or on the water we tied on the usual - a #12 Great Lake Beetle. Since I first saw this pattern in 1977 it has proven to be one of my favourite flies for searching the water. It can be easily seen by angler and fish, it floats well, and Western Lakes fish love it, even if none of the real beetles are falling on the water - as was the case for our entire trip.

We waded a LONG way for a LONG time before Bob spotted the first fish. It came up and scooped his GL Beetle, and Bob was a happy man as he released a feisty 3 pound Ada brownie. Not long after, I spotted, covered, hooked and landed a 2 pounder. We had to look hard for them, but during the next several hours, while the sky was sunny and clear, Bob caught a second fish and I managed three more. One brown was kept so we could check its stomach contents (only a few small mayfly nymphs, as it turned out). It was also destined to be our sashimi entrée for dinner. All of the browns, 2 - 3 pounds in weight, seemed to be in reasonable condition. As we sat and took a break for lunch a bloke in a boat with his dog aboard motored in and landed a few hundred yards ahead. Dog and angler disappeared to the



*Jim is a fine cook, and Tassie trout are particularly appetizing*

north – following the fence-line to Sandy Lagoon. That put an end to our plan to fish Sandy. So we retraced our steps and worked back towards the car, reasonably satisfied with our first day's fishing.

The next day the near lakes were like Bourke Street again, so we walked out to the Christie's Creek Lakes, which took a couple hours. Very disappointing. It was a gorgeous sunny day but we saw only a few fish rising to black spinners well out in deeper water and a couple of cruisers in shallow. I managed to fool one of them with a Quill Gordon; Bob only managed to collect some big blisters.

On the Saturday, which gave us an overcast sky, spitting rain and a blustery northerly, we had a "rest day" and took a gentle stroll around Scottie's Corner on Little Pine to give Bob's wounded feet a rest. As expected, there was no hatch but we managed three small fish on slowly-retrieved nymphs. Sunday was sunny again, so we fished the north shore of Augusta, near the James River. A couple fat 3 pounders fell to the Beetle while we were polaroiding. We also checked out Little Blue, but nothing was rising or showing. The next day (Monday) was cool, with occasional sun early, so we took advantage of an empty car park and fished Carters. SO LOW! All the normally productive shallows were dry, rocky barrens. There was no hatch and no fish rising, so I fished a black Woolly Bugger along the drop-off on the south shore to see what I could find ... and picked up a couple of three pound browns for my efforts. With the sky clouding over and wind rising, we stopped at Botsford. Only one other angler was there, so we let him have the north end and we waded the south end. Both Bob and I dredged up 3 pounders on black Woolly Buggers.

The following day was foul, so we hid out at Penstock. We couldn't believe it - a good dun hatch in progress and not a single rise. We were totally skunked for the only day of the trip. It was cold, windy and wet the next day, so it was off to the Cow Paddock at Arthurs. The water was high and very weedy – almost impossible for shore fishermen. I managed one brown on a Brown Nymph just before lunch. After that we retreated to the road shore near the wall at Little Pine, where we saw a couple of fish head and tail rise – once – and that was it. No hatch; no fish.

Our final day dawned cold, windy and drizzly, but we headed off up top anyway. The weather was supposed to be on the mend, so we were hopeful. As it turned out we were the only madmen climbing into our waders at Botsford at 10 am. It was 3°C as we waded south to north with a cold southerly behind us, blind flogging the chop and stopping every few minutes to blow on our frozen fingers. I managed to spot one fish, covered him: he took the fly then jumped as he felt the hook ... and then he was gone. After lunch and thawing out in the car we retreated to Carters for one more shot. By then it had warmed up to a balmy 10°C, the wind was dropping and there were patches of blue sky and glorious sunny periods. I made a beeline for the north shore and ended the trip with a superb 4 pound brown that was cruising the drop-off. It was a fish that couldn't resist, of all things, ... a Pedder Bug!

So, that's Tassie for another year.

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Essential Midge - Mick Hall*



*(Male Chironomid – matched with a size 16 fly)*

(Mick Hall is well known to us all. A VFFA member, he is also one of Australia's best known and respected fly tiers. When asked recently for details of one of his flies for our Fly of the Month he provided a very comprehensive exposition on our midges, along with several patterns he suggests. Here is a brief summary of Mick's notes, along with two of his favourite midge patterns. We will give details of some others that Mick recommends next month.)

Those who are not up with midge fishing techniques are seriously missing out. Some will say midge fishing is just for lakes; how wrong they are. Midge are found everywhere, from fast flowing mountain streams to lowland rivers and lakes and swamps. There are around 200 species of Chironomid in Australia, and as the work of species identification is far from over this number will change as time goes by.

As an example of the importance of midge fishing opportunities in our river systems, in the early 1980s E.S.G. Schreiber from Monash University conducted a definitive study of drifting insect life in the Acheron River in Victoria. Many aquatic species drift with the current, especially during the period leading up to the New Moon. Mayfly are famous for doing this. Schreiber's survey, taken over two years, showed a very interesting result - chironomid (midge) represented some 43.6% of the drift matter, followed by mayfly and caddis. It should be noted that most of this drift action occurred from dusk and on into the night, when midge are most active.

As stated earlier midge are everywhere and are found in most waters, but how do you know what species are in your area and what size fly to use and when? I wish I could answer that question but I can't. The answer is up to you. Get to know your favourite waters and take some time to look at the bugs that are moving around you. Take notes on such features as size, colour and the date. If you have a camera with a reasonable macro facility then it will do all of this for you.

Colour can vary a lot in any particular water; midges can vary from pale olive green to black with every shade in between. A point to note is that in many instances the colour of the adult flying midge will be similar to that of the emerging midge. The key colours to carry in your fly box are pale olive, olive, black and blood red. To find some midge samples check the leaves on overhanging bushes or trees and you will see them there. They are very flighty and will take off at any unnatural movement of the leaves or branches.

Fishing midge patterns is different from the usual techniques, but if you persist you will succeed and over time the rewards will be very beneficial. If you are into "Short-line Nymphing" you are well on your way, as that technique is ideal for midge fishing in streams and rivers. Fish slow bubble line type water, using one or two flies, with or without an indicator, and watch your line closely. Give it 110% attention and expect a take with every cast. Believe me, intense concentration is the key to success. If fishing faster water you will need weighted flies to get down to where the fish are. If you are just starting off, look for the bubble line water as it is easier to handle.

Often you will just see a flash as a trout takes your fly - strike immediately. Expect a take at any time and be ready to strike at the slightest inkling of a take. The faster you are the more fish you will catch.

When is the best time to try fishing a midge pattern? Midge come off all year round, with late spring and all through summer being the best. But remember, it is the week leading up to a full moon when they prefer to hatch on mass. Midge on lakes can produce some of the most intense fishing that can be found on a stillwater. The best fishing times are from daylight to mid-morning, and again at last light.

After the early morning calm a breeze will normally come up and wind lanes will start to form; that is when the fishing gets really interesting. Wind lanes are like highways for feeding fish. As they form the floating food matter is compacted within these lanes and it is common to find a number of fish feeding at any one time. Keep your eye on the edges of these wind lanes as trout often cruise along the outside, using the rough area as cover and moving into the lane to feed whenever they so choose. On clear sunny days the trout will generally feed along the lane with the sun at their backs, as they have no eyelids so it is difficult for them to look into the sun, especially for fish feeding on the surface.

### **The Flies**

I highly recommend that you tie your midge patterns using a grub hook, preferably with a straight eye, such as the Mustad Signature Series C49S in sizes 10 through to 18. You should carry midge patterns in a number of sizes, as explained with the tyings featured below.

### **Emerging Olive Midge as tied by Mick Hall**

Hook: Mustad C49S, sizes 12 – 18

Thread: White 10/0

Body: White Uni-Flex stained with an olive permanent marking pen

Emerging wing buds:  
Pearl Crystal Flash - 4 strands

Bead: Hi Lite Silver glass bead, size to suit



Notes: This pattern is one of my favourites and I normally tie it with a dubbed thorax as it is essential for lake work.

### **Full Stop as tied by Mick Hall**

Hook: Mustad R50 dry fly hook

Size: 18 or 20

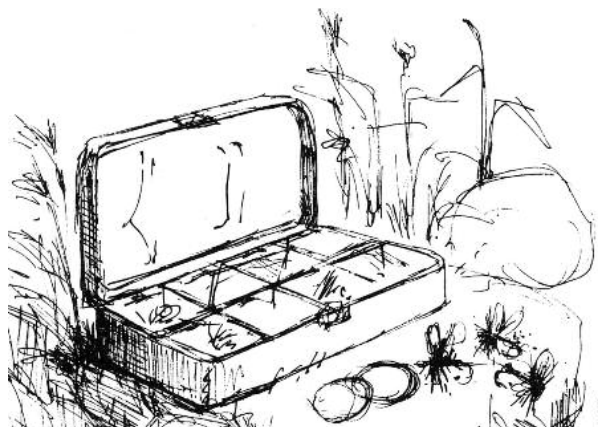
Thread: Black 10/0

Body Hackle: Black cock

Notes: In this instance the hackle has been trimmed to size and to enhance its floating ability.



I designed this pattern just on twenty years ago to match the little black balling midge up on the Yarra River in Victoria during the summer months. This activity is not uncommon on waters that have silt bottoms blended with a little gravel.





## 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 Peter Boag 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.

## V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA).....	\$70.00 each
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
Wine glasses and whisky glasses inscribed with VFFA logo, set of 6.....	\$45.00 per set
Cloth badges .....	\$7.00 each
<b><i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie.....</b>	<b>\$20.00</b>
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 0423 283 079.

### VALUED DONORS

#### The following made donations for the raffle at the 2012 Annual Dinner:

Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network • Flyfisher Magazine • FlyLife Magazine • Hayes on Brumbys • Hookup Bait and Tackle • J. M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle, Mick Hall Flies • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Nick Taransky Bamboo Rod Maker • Pro-Angler Tackle • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Compleat Angler Box Hill • The Flyfisher Tackle Store • The Fly Fishers Rod and Creel in Thornbury • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle

## VFFA Meetings & Activities

### April 2013

- 12 – 14 Big River trip – staying at Enoch's Point
- 18 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club - Speaker: Fred Craker**
- 24 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

### May 2013

- 3 Opening of the Australian Fly Fishing Museum in Clarendon, Tasmania - Dinner
- 4 Opening of the Australian Fly Fishing Museum – Cocktail Function
- 16 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Equipment Auction**
- 22 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

### June 2013

- 2 Sunday Casting commences – at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 6 Dinner with Partners – at the Celtic Club (Date to be confirmed).
- 9 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 15 Annual Cane Makers' Day – Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club
- 16 Annual Cane Day – at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 20 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**
- 23 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 26 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 30 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

### July 2013

- 7 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 14 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 18 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**
- 21 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 28 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

### August 2013

- 2/3/4 Annual Bullen Merri trip (To be confirmed)
- 4 Sunday Casting - 10am to 2pm at the Red Tag Pools
- 11 Sunday Casting - 10am to 2pm at the Red Tag Pools
- 14 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 18 Sunday Casting - 10am to 2pm at the Red Tag Pools
- 23 Annual Dinner**
- 24 President's Casting Day - 10am to 3pm at the Red Tag Pools

### September 2013

- 11 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club: preparation for AGM
- 19 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club: AGM**