

# FLY LINES



AUGUST 2016

## The August Annual Dinner – with Travis Dowling and Anthony Forster

This year's Dinner is our 84th Annual Dinner, and will again be held at the Celtic Club. Our guest speakers are Travis Dowling and Anthony Forster. Travis is Executive Director of Fisheries, and Anthony Forster is our Freshwater Fisheries Manager. Travis will speak about the Government's 'Target One Million' program, where \$46 million is being spent to grow participation in recreational fishing in Victoria to a million anglers by 2020. Anthony will give us an update on the 'Wild Trout Fisheries Management Program', a collection of nine projects currently being undertaken over a three year period to give us a much better scientific understanding of factors affecting the health of our Victorian trout fishery.

The Dinner will also see the launch of the third book in the VFFA trilogy, a superb publication entitled *Time Flies*, by Rick Keam, featuring the many flies that are associated with VFFA members. An order form is included with this issue of Fly Lines for members who would like to pre-order copies. An invitation to attend the dinner is also included with this issue.

FRIDAY, August 26,  
6:30 for 7:00pm at the  
Celtic Club

All members (and their guests) are invited to attend, but **PLEASE** complete and return the invitation acceptance enclosed if you haven't already done so. Note that dinner acceptances are to be sent to Treasurer Tony Mitchem, and book orders are to be sent separately to Peter Boag. Details are given on the two inserts.



*Travis Dowling*



*Anthony Forster*

# THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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## September AGM

Members are reminded that our September meeting will be our AGM. It's still a few weeks away, but President Hamish Hughes is keen to remind us that all financial members are eligible for nomination and election to the Council. Notice papers relevant to the AGM are included with this newsletter, including the Nomination Form, Appointment of Proxy Form, and the Notice of Annual General Meeting.

Council meets regularly and all the management issues involved in running the Association are dealt with there, so that our monthly general meetings can be given over totally to the advertised

activities – guest speakers, auctions, fly tying demonstrations ...

So if you have some experience and talent in management and a keen desire to see our Association remain vibrant and responsive to the needs of members, please give some thought to nominating for Council. Be assured, meetings are lively and entertaining, and you will enjoy your participation, as well as contributing your skills and expertise for the benefit of our Association.

The date – Thursday, September 22, at the Celtic Club.

# President's Message

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It was wonderful to see so many VFFA members from near and far at the Grace Darling Hotel for Marty Rogers' farewell celebration last month. It was very moving. Marty was a wonderful contributor to the VFFA and a warm and caring friend to so many. I am pleased that this issue of *Fly Lines* will carry tributes to him.

Even though the weather has been bitter we can look ahead to better times. Hopefully the heavy rains will have flushed out many Victorian streams and may in turn provide better fishing as a result. I guess it is a bit too early to know. Maybe Travis Dowling and Anthony Forster from Fisheries Victoria will be able to cast a light on this when they address us at the Annual Dinner on August 26.

Recently the VFFA has been particularly active with other fly fishing organisations. We were well represented at the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club's Annual Dinner on July 23. We competed for the inaugural Bruce Whitehead Trophy with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club in Ballarat on July 30, meeting at the Ballarat FFC. Another tie. We have agreed to support the Calder Fly Fishing Association at their *come and try* open day in Woodend on

October 16. We are talking to Red Tag Fly Fishers about making better use of the facilities in Fairfield. We are making arrangements for our annual Warrnambool trip. And soon we have a date for our Dam Day with the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers. Wearing his VFFA trout policy hat, Dermot O'Brien with Lyndon Webb met with the Australian Trout Foundation and VRFish on August 2. More information about all these activities will follow.

Christopher Bassano's presentation was most illuminating. Seeing the light rods, reels and very fine leaders that he uses in international fly fishing competitions certainly opened my eyes. The tactics used and the particular abilities of champions were of great interest. He had us all captive for the best part of two hours. Afterward Christopher mentioned the devastation the recent rains have caused in Tasmania. However since then he has seen some good trout and is hopeful that there will be a good season ahead.

I hope to see many of you at the Annual Dinner on Friday August 26. I look forward to collecting my copy of the *Time Flies* book there after Rick Keam launches it. (Have you ordered yours yet?) Peter Boag says the standard of photography and production is absolutely outstanding. We have President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM the following day (August 27). If the weather looks too bleak we will make an announcement at the dinner.

And then at midnight on September 3 the rivers open to trout fishing again.

Tight lines,

## Christopher Bassano at the July Meeting

Our guest speaker for the July meeting was Christopher Bassano, well-known Tasmanian fishing guide and leading member of the Australian international fly fishing team. Christopher proved to be very entertaining and informative speaker, his message being that his membership of the Australian team enabled him to observe and fish with some of the most skilled anglers in the world. The aim of his presentation was to share with us some of the insights and techniques he had learned from these top anglers. Christopher began speaking just after 8:00 pm and finally concluded at 10:30. His talk was laced with fascinating stories of his experiences competing in world championships, and included a multitude of ideas on techniques and strategies he had learned. At the end of the evening he was given a long round of applause by a very appreciative audience, many of whom remained behind to question him further on issues he'd raised. The transcript of his presentation ran to nearly 20 pages, so in this issue we have reprinted a summary of the first half. We will give the second half of Christopher's talk in the September issue.

I'm very glad to be here to speak to you tonight. I have chosen to talk about river fishing, and particularly dry fly fishing on rivers, which is something I particularly love doing. Most of my work in Tasmania tends to be lake driven because people come to Tasmania to fish the lakes, but in my spare time I fish the rivers for preference.

As you know, I am involved in competition fishing as a member of the Australian team, and most international competitions are river-based. The world championships are mostly a five session competition where competitors will typically fish four river sessions and one lake session. Next year the world championships in Slovakia will involve five river sessions.

Competition angling is mostly based in Europe where there are a lot of good rivers, and consequently I've had the opportunity to fish with and against some of the very best river anglers in the world. So there are a lot of things that I have picked up and learned from these top river anglers, having spent time with them outside competition as well as during competitions.



*Christopher Bassano introducing his presentation*

People often don't understand how competitions work. They suspect that championship competitors are secretive and don't share information with others, but I've certainly found that there is a really good mutual sharing of information, particularly internationally when you go abroad. These top

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*An interested and attentive audience*

European anglers might want to know about how we catch wild brown trout, and we want to know about catching grayling and stocked rainbows in their rivers.

So there is a great mix of information shared, particularly after a competition is finished. There is a real brotherhood among competitors, and we spend time with each other outside the competitions. So a huge wealth of information and knowledge is generated that we are able to pool and thus become better fishermen.

In the world of international competitive fishing the Czechs and the French are the two best. The French used to be the best anglers in the world, but over the last probably ten years the Czechs have become almost unbeatable. They are outstanding anglers, and are particularly friendly people as well – great people to talk to and very open with their information. They are happy to tell you anything you want to ask because they are so good at what they are doing they're convinced you couldn't beat them

anyway. These Czech anglers really understand what you need to do to catch fish in rivers. And if you ask about the flies they use you are asking the wrong questions.

One reason why competitions have really helped with river angling is that Europeans have grayling to catch, and the eyesight of a grayling is four times better than the eyesight of a trout, so grayling see leader tippet very clearly. They are actually very hard to catch. People think that they are easy to catch because they go out and fish for trout and pick up a grayling or two. What they don't realise is that there is usually a school of perhaps 50 grayling there and while they have caught one there are 49 others they didn't catch. But European anglers understand this.

It is important to remember that in a competition the idea is to catch as many fish as you possibly can. The challenge in a competition is this - how can I catch fish in the worst possible conditions or in the worst possible spot? Because you don't get to choose the spot where you are

fishing – you get given a section of river to fish and you then have to catch as many as you can. So you need to know techniques that will pull fish out of a spot where no one else can catch one.

And that helps you when conditions are tough at home, because you begin to think outside the square and work out how you can catch fish in tough conditions. You know that there is a fish there somewhere and you want to catch it. Competitions help develop that mindset. So rather than just walking past a spot or throwing a Royal Wulff up somewhere with a nymph under it and waiting for it to go down, you actually start to dissect a river and work out where the fish are going to be, and thus maximise your catch rate. At the end of the day you might actually catch just a couple more fish than someone who is not into competition fishing, but you may have moved just 200 metres and he's walked 2½ km to catch the same number.

From a guide's point of view I try to teach these things to my clients so that they can then go out and catch more fish themselves. So tonight we'll have a look at the latest techniques and the latest gear setups, and competition fishing is great for that.

I'm going to talk mostly about dry fly fishing, because everybody likes dry fly fishing. Nymph fishing is very technical, and more difficult than dry fly fishing. Being a good nymph fisherman is much harder than being a good dry fly fisherman.

When I'm guiding I see people make a lot of errors, and the first of these is in reading the water. Everyone thinks they can read the water, but knowing exactly where the fish are going to be, and how many are likely to be there, is very important. Talking from a Tasmanian perspective, the fish in the rivers there actually sit in different spots to where

they do on the mainland. In the rivers here in Victoria the trout tend to sit in those nice depressions and bubble lines, whereas our Tasmanian fish tend to sit along the edges. So in Tassie you might have this nice deep chute with just one fish in it, but there are ten more sitting out along the edges. And everybody's fishing over them to that spot on the other side of the river where they think the fish are.

So a lot of time should be spent fishing all the water to locate the fish, and if you don't do that then everything else I talk about tonight is largely irrelevant, as you will be fishing where the fish aren't. It is very much a trial and error thing, and if you get onto a river where there is a reasonable head of fish then try fishing in other spots and in other depths of water. We all know that the little bubble line there is going to have a fish in it, but there are very likely others that you are missing out on. It really is trial and error and varies from river to river. I have fished thousands of rivers across the world and I can tell you that every river I've fished has fish sitting in spots that I haven't seen in other rivers.

I fished with a Czech angler who comes to Tassie and ran a course here last year. His name is Martin Droz, and he's been the best angler in the world for many years as far as winning world championships goes. In the world championships held recently in New Zealand he won the individual gold medal, even though he had never previously fished New Zealand. In the last session he fished a river beat about 150 metres long for three hours, and he was fishing it last so it had previously been fished by four of the best anglers in the world. And in this last session he caught more fish than the combined total of the other four anglers. He caught 47 trout in three hours while the combined total of the other four anglers was about 36. >>>

So this bloke can fish, and I have seen him get fish out of really bad beats when no one previously had caught anything there in the whole competition. So when you get to spend time with these sorts of anglers and ask them questions and watch what they are doing certain things start to emerge.

Martin would often do something totally different; something that you had been told to never do, and he would just say, "Well, why not?" He would, for example, be fishing a slow clear pool with hardly any run in it. He would throw a cast up the pool and you'd think to yourself that this was clearly a waste of time. Then he would start stripping his dry fly across the surface. You'd say, "Why are you doing that?" And he would say, "Well, why not? Nothing else has worked." So he did it – strip, strip, strip - then whack! What the heck has happened there?? How did that happen?

And he would do that sort of stuff all the time, doing things that you had been told not to do for years. Of course he would do all the proper things first, but if they didn't work he would try something else.

And that runs through all our fishing. Countless times people have told me how bad the fishing has been in Tasmania this year. Yet they keep doing the same things they have been doing for years. I say to them, "Why wouldn't you try something different." But their idea of something different in fact is not really all that different. So if you take nothing else from tonight's talk, then try things. When you're out there and the fishing is tough, try things from left field that you've perhaps been told not to do. Give them a go, because you never know what might happen.

The second error that I see anglers making is casting too far. A very common mistake that I see all the time. We all have



*Long fine tippets are important!*

this tendency to cast a long way and get long drifts, and you're asking for trouble when you do that. First of all, you are likely to hook any trees behind you. But more importantly, there are generally lots of changes of current between you and where your fly is landing, so you've got more likelihood of drag. Thirdly, if a fish eats your fly the chances of landing a fish you hooked 60 feet away is a lot less than if it's hooked just in front of you. When he starts jumping there is a very good chance he'll come off.

I see people casting a long way because they can, or because they think that's what they're supposed to do. But this varies depending on the type of water. If you're standing on a flat piece of water that's got very little flow then you are going to have to cast a reasonable distance because your wading shockwaves are going up the river and the fish are cruising about, so it's a little like a lake scenario. The faster the current, or the more broken the water, the closer you can get to the fish. In bouldery pocket water you can fish right under your rod tip. If you keep your line in the air with no drag the fish will come up and eat your fly – it's easy.

It's a case of working out the right distance – how close can you get to the fish before he spooks? Then step one pace back. This is something that you need to practice, so get on the water and test it out. If you know that there is a fish there in front of you, then see how close you can get to him. If the water is fast and deep then you can get very close. If it's fast and shallow you can still get close. In slow water you need to be further away. But don't cast long distances in rivers because it's simply not effective.

The other thing that anglers do is lengthen their line all the time. They get in the river and make a couple of casts.

Then they lengthen their line out, then lengthen it again, and again. They have this tendency to stand still and just keep lengthening their line out until they're casting a long way.

The best thing to do without a doubt in river fishing, and this took me a long time to learn, is to work out early on what the ideal amount of line is that you want to use, then use that amount of line all the time, because then you know exactly how far each cast is going. So I'll get in the water and start casting short because there might be a fish there close to me. I'll cast my ideal length. It's short and gives really good presentation at that length. If I then want to cast a bit further over to the other side, I'll move closer but still cast the same length of line. I won't strip line out and cast further. Rather, I'm going to keep the same length of line for all of my casting by wading to maintain the same distance.

If you keep using this same length of line all the time you become extremely good at it. So then when a fish rises you know just where you need to stand in order for that to be the perfect casting distance, and you use just the right amount of line. By using the same amount of line all the time you become outstanding at that length and you don't need to worry about lengthening or shortening. That's a really important piece of advice as far as rivers go.

Of course we can all think of exceptions to the rule, for example having to bomb out long casts to some fish in a New Zealand river. But this is a general river fishing rule that will work for most of your fishing. There is no problem with having a short practice cast to make sure that everything is exactly right. You could make a practice cast that's short and wide and see that it is one foot short, so then pull one foot more off your reel.

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But you're still better off moving yourself into the place to make your same length of cast. You also need to know your leader and your leader length, but I'll talk about that later on.

I am a big one for making a practice cast well short of the fish if I'm in complex currents so that I can see the effect of the currents on my fly. Sometimes you don't need the practice cast – you recognise the type of water instantly and can see what sort of cast you need to make. But there is nothing wrong with putting a cast into a particular spot to see how much time you have before drag effects the fly. I'm not talking here about an easy river with one single current coming down the middle. Anyone can fish in that. I'm talking about more complex currents where to get across the current you have to throw a mend. But if you throw a good cast in the first place you won't need a mend.

The fifth and last issue that I see a lot of is when people cast in rivers like they do in lakes, which is wrong. Lake fishermen make lovely long straight casts. The line goes out and lands straight and they keep their rod tip low. Good river fishermen will always throw a curve in their cast and keep their rod tip high to keep line off the water.

Do you know what a negative curve cast is? Let's imagine a situation in a river where up ahead there is a rock out in the current and a fish is sitting just behind the rock where the current is much slower. If you make a straight cast to where the fish is you're going to have immediate drag. The ideal cast to this fish will involve some slack line so that the fly can drift to the fish without drag. But the slack line needs to be beside the rock where the current is fast. So we need to make a cast that has some slack on the water, and the way to do that is to throw a negative curve cast.

A negative curve cast is an underpowered cast, i.e. one that doesn't have enough power to turn the line over. The shape of a negative curve cast has the line curving around to the right with the fly back behind the bend, like a J-shaped candy cane.

Of course if I was a left-hander the shape would be the other way. A positive curve cast is one where the line curves around to the left for a right-handed caster, and this is produced by an overpowered cast.

In fly fishing rivers we should always try to throw a negative curve. In river fishing we want good soft presentations and nice long drag free drifts, and long leaders and fine tippets help with this. If you put 20 feet of 2 lb line on the end of your leader you'd produce is a beautiful negative curve cast.

If I was going to wade up the river casting to either bank I would always cast to the right-hand bank on the forehand side and I'd always cast on the backhand side to the other bank. This is because I need to throw negative curve casts on the forehand side because these will give me long drag free drifts to the fish. Now the negative curve on the backhand side is in fact easier because we are all stronger on the forehand side. And remember that a negative curve comes from an underpowered cast and it's easier to not put enough power on the backhand side.

The biggest challenge with a negative curve cast is how big a curve to throw, and that comes with practice. You don't need to throw a gigantic curve if the currents are not all that dissimilar. If I throw a huge negative curve cast in that situation and a fish eats the fly I'm confronted with a large amount of slack when I try to strike. So the size of the curve will be determined by the differences in the currents. Throwing



*The rod in Christopher's right-hand was a very soft and flexible Japanese rod made especially for fishing dry flies*

negative curves is easy, but getting the size right is much more difficult. So that's where practice comes in.

Remember that the whole purpose here is to get slack line on the water. People say well why can't you throw a mend. Of course you can throw a mend, but it's a lot harder to throw a mend than it is to throw a good cast. If you throw a mend then you need some slack on the water anyway in order to throw the mend, because otherwise you going to drag the fly. So the negative curve casts are the way to go.

For those who don't know how, here is a very brief explanation of how to throw a negative curve. (At this point in his presentation Christopher used a rod to demonstrate how to make a negative curve cast. The Orvis website at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TKtmlVMgWPU> has a neat demonstration of how to throw positive and negative curve casts.)

A negative curve cast however would be wrong if you are fishing a nymph under a dry. If you throw a negative curve cast in this situation the dry fly will land upstream of the nymph. The nymph will then sink through the water but you're not in touch with it and you'll possibly miss a take, as the dry will be slow to react. However, if you are fishing deep water and the nymph is down near the bottom where the current is slower then when the dry fly catches up with the nymph you'll have a really good drift.

Good dry fly fishing requires a holistic approach. Let's talk about the things that are going to make all of this so much easier for you: rods, fly lines, leaders, tippets, and flies – these five things. Leaving flies aside for a bit you have to get all four of the others correct because they work in conjunction with one another. If one piece of the puzzle is missing it just won't work as it should.

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The most important of these four is your tippet, for a few reasons. Nice thin tippet gives you better presentation. It will lay down on the water more softly, and it has less surface area so it doesn't drag as quickly and will sit there without drag for a lot longer. Thus your fly will obviously move much more naturally and you'll have good presentation, which is vital in fishing rivers. Also, the thinner line carries less energy and so doesn't have the tendency to turn over, which is good because we don't want our line to turn over and we don't want it to go out straight. You'll find it's much easier to make a good negative curve cast with a thinner tippet, too. So your tippet needs to be both thinner and longer. If your fly keeps turning over then just keep extending your tippet. You'll eventually get to a point where it just won't turn over.

I fished recently with Martin Kroz (the Czech champion I mentioned earlier). We were walking up a river together and he was short line nymphing. He cast his fly and said: "I just had a refusal. A fish just came up and looked at my fly and went down again. My tippet is too thick." He brought his flies in and cut them off, tied on some thinner tippet and then retied his flies. On his next he hooked a fish. He did this four times in the day. As far as he was concerned it was all about the tippet. At other times he'd say the fly was not drifting right because the tippet was not right, and he'd do the same thing with his dry fly when a fish would come up and refuse his fly. This relates a lot to his fishing for grayling in Europe, where the tippet is so important. He often fished downstream to grayling and these fish would come up and see the tippet so clearly and thus were tougher to catch. When trout fishing if you replace your tippet with thinner material it is amazing how often that change works too.

It drives me mad to hear people talking about 6 lb or 8 lb line, because all that is a complete load of rubbish. The labels they write on the spools are a lie. Even the diameter is a lie. Take Stroft, for example. It's great stuff and is stronger and thicker than they tell you it is. I used it a lot and still have some. But I work off the diameter in millimetres. Take 4 lb Maxima. It's never been 4 lb and is closer to 8 lb, and is as thick as other 8 lb line. People think that this is amazing stuff and one of the strongest 4 lb lines ever. But if you compare it with other 4 lb lines they are half the diameter.

Should you use fluorocarbon as tippet material for dry fly fishing? I use monofilament for dry fly fishing all the time, and I don't use fluorocarbon for two reasons. First, fluorocarbon of the same diameter tends to be stiffer than monofilament, and I prefer limp line for dry fly fishing. More importantly, fluorocarbon sinks and if your tippet length is 1.5 metre then you'll have 1.5 metres of tippet sinking after the fly lands. Have you ever tried to mend a sinking line? It's impossible. So I never use fluorocarbon as tippet material when I am dry fly fishing though it is very good for nymphing; outstanding in fact. When I'm fishing dry fly I grease my leaders right up to the tippet.

Here is a point that is important in all fly fishing: whatever you do has to be right psychologically for you. If you don't believe in something or have no confidence in it then it is not going to work for you. How often do you see one person catching lots of fish on a particular fly, but you don't think much of that fly and you can't catch fish on it. But the other bloke is catching plenty because he does have confidence in it. You have to be confident in everything that you're doing in fly fishing.

As I said, tippet is important. I carry a micrometer everywhere so that I can accurately measure the diameter of the lines that I'm using. Hence I can tell you that the diameter of Stroft is 0.02 mm out on all their spools. If the spool says it's 0.12 mm diameter it's actually 0.14 mm. And I'm not just singling out Stroft here, as all other line brands do the same. You really do need to work in diameters, and in comparing lines compare the strengths of identical diameters. A micrometer helps.

When fishing for grayling in Europe you often find that you are fishing to fish that see a lot of fishing pressure and are located in very clear water, so we have to fish tippet that is 0.09 mm in diameter. I fished the Mataura River in New Zealand last January. We fished with 0.12 mm tippet material and we didn't lose a fish.

Longer tippets give you better presentation, provided you can cast them. On my first trip to France I went fishing with a guy called John Pierre, who was the expert that the French team members go to in order to learn how to dry fly fish. He fishes the Dordogne River in France, a big slow flat chalk streamy water where this bloke specialises in fishing the dry fly. He took one look at my leader, then cut it off and added 4.0 metres of tippet material to the end of my leader. It was all about the presentation. We were fishing for

grayling using 0.10 mm diameter tippet and were fishing downstream to these fish and making good slack line casts, though it took a long time to get used to pausing long enough on the back cast to allow the tippet to lay out. The whole point was to get delicate presentation and drag free drift with the fly not being hindered in any way by the line. So long tippets are the way to go, and the longest tippet that you can get away with is the tippet you should fish.

Of course the big problem with fine tippets is breaking fish off. Getting the line through the eye of the hook is another problem, which I am starting to have trouble with. The best knot to use when tying your tippet to the end of your leader is a doubled-over three turn water knot (surgeon's knot). In tying the knot you double over the tippet then tie a three turn water knot. Because it is doubled over it will have twice the breaking strain. This means that the leader to tippet will not break but instead the tippet will break at the fly, which in competition fishing is important, because competitors are on a time limit and tying on just a fly is much quicker than rebuilding the end of your leader and tippet. I use blood knots for tying the other sections of my leader. (the September issue will have the second part of Christopher's presentation.)

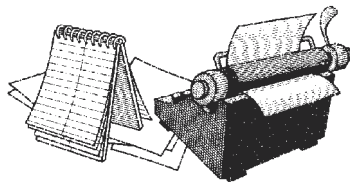


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## New Members

It is with pleasure that we welcome Jeremy Skuse as a new member of the Association. We trust that his membership brings many pleasant and enjoyable times, and lots of happy memories. Welcome to the VFFA Jeremy.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



"The idea that guided fishing is a threat is erroneous. Fishing pressure isn't a problem where suitable bag limits, including zero-take in some areas, are enacted. The global experience is that increased participation in angling equals increased advocacy, and advocacy equals protection. The Elk River (in British Columbia) is a case in point. Up until the late 1980s, 'catch and kill' was the usual ethos among Elk anglers. Since cuthroats are so easy to fool, most of the bigger fish had been being quickly cropped off: relatively few survived long enough to reach twelve inches, and the average was only ten inches.

With the advent of guided fishing in the 1990s, the public profile of the Elk was raised considerably. The guides themselves pushed for catch-and-release fishing, and this proposal was finally accepted by locals following a devastating flood in 1995. Each year after that, the total number of fish increased - and so too did the average size. The thing is, this remarkable improvement in fishing took place in tandem with increased activity from both guided and unguided anglers.

Rather than get excited, some locals began to worry that the Elk would become too attractive to outsiders. But who is an outsider? ... Is parochial selfishness a fair basis on which to formulate fishing regulations?

As for another claim - that guides commercialise the recreational fishery - compelling analogies can be drawn between guides, tackle-store proprietors

and the manufacturers of fly lines. "Anyway," Russ (Greg's fishing guide for the Elk) stressed, "I don't guide primarily for money. I do it because I enjoy passing on my passion to others: my family, my friends *and* complete strangers."

What about authors? When one disgruntled local discovered that Joe Brooks had inspired me to fish the Canadian Rockies, he declared that all fishing texts should be burned.

The real threats to fisheries are always environmental and political. And the only way anglers can counter them is by recruiting more fishing fanatics, not by marginalising them." (quoted from *The Last Wild Trout*, by Greg French.)

First, I can thoroughly recommend Greg's book, just recently released. I've almost finished it, a chapter a night, and it's a great read. Greg believes that without a passionate fishing community caring about their existence wild trout won't survive. So he headed off around the world to visit the last truly great trout fisheries left on the planet.

And I very happily went along too, sharing the journey with him and enjoying his accounts of fishing for salmonids in Tasmania, New Zealand, Iceland, the UK, Mongolia, Slovenia, British Columbia, the USA ... in fact twenty significant locations, including Japan's Hokkaido island, which Rick Wallace described to us at last year's Christmas dinner. Although there's a significant conservation message underlying all this, it's not loaded with

heavy science. Greg's account of his travels is totally entertaining and a really pleasurable read. With Fathers' Day happening soon ... well here's a tome well worth acquiring.

In the quote above Greg talks about his experience fishing the Elk River in British Columbia. Locals were concerned about the word getting out and too many non-locals fishing their patch. This is always a lively debate. Is there a problem if a good fishery becomes too popular and gets flogged? Should we keep secret those favourite spots we've got to love because they fish really well?

Greg French is a strong advocate for sharing the good news. It's a theme reflected in some of his other writing, and as he says here, "The global experience is that increased participation in angling equals increased advocacy, and advocacy equals protection." A classic local example he describes in another place relates to Little Pine Lagoon in Tasmania. It's a while since I read the details, but apparently some years ago a commercial mob was very keen to purchase sole access to the land around the Lagoon and kick the anglers off one of our most famous fisheries. It was only the pressure applied by the huge number of dedicated Little Pine anglers that stopped it happening.

I have to confess that I've acquired a number of favourite locations over the years, and as part of my confession I must reveal that nearly all of them are places that others have generously told me about. Many of my regular haunts are hardly secret – popular spots along the Yarra, the gorgeous little Steavenson, bits of the Acheron and Goulburn, a couple of little Gippsland creeks, ... But without the revelations of mates I would never have got to know many of my favourite venues.

Of course it's the rivers we worry about. I'm not giving much away by suggesting that Newlyn Reservoir and Hepburn Lagoon are not bad places to fish. But how much unwanted pressure can our favourite little creeks carry? I recall a mate moaning some years ago about the Murrindindi River, a favourite and very productive haunt of his. Then it got written up in one of our popular magazines and the number of anglers 'discovering' it multiplied exponentially. According to my aggrieved mate, 'the fishing went to pot'. I'm not sure how accurate his assessment is, as most of the streams within a couple of hours drive from Melbourne have always copped a lot of pressure, yet they continue to produce. Trout are both spooky and resilient, and hence seem to survive in numbers despite the multitude of anglers trying to remove them. I'm sure the growing popularity of 'catch and release', particularly among fly fishers, makes a difference here. If I stalk and catch a 10" rainbow on the Steavenson it's hardly a meal, but if I carefully put it back and see it scoot away I've done the next angler a favour. Hopefully he/she will do the same for me.

I'm also aware that there have been guides who have tried hard to gain sole access to good sections of some of our rivers and streams. I can appreciate their dilemma and the economic pressure for them to have access to reliable and productive water. But No Sir! Our public waterways need to be accessible to us all.

Anyway, that's my rant for the month. And if you do happen to know a good spot that you are happy to share with me I'll try to keep quiet about it. Maybe ...

Tight lines, and lots of drag-free drifts,

*Lyndon*

## Vale Marty Rogers

As was mentioned by Hamish in his President's Message, one of our longest serving members, Marty Rogers, died on July 1. Marty made a very significant contribution to the Association, and to fly fishing in general in Victoria through his involvement over several years in the tackle trade. Four of his close friends in the Association – Robert Roles, Dermot O'Brien, Jim Allen and Mike Stevens - have provided the following tributes, reflecting on times with Marty. They provide a wonderful collection of memories of a truly memorable character.

### *Robert Roles - On knowing Marty...*

Members will be saddened to hear of the passing of Marty Rogers on July 1st, after a long illness, aged 76. I first met Mart around 1961, and he introduced himself as Leslie or Les, but shortly after said he preferred Marty. Mart first joined the VFFA at about this time and introduced me to the Association in 1962. This led to Jim Allen joining in 1963.

Marty will be remembered for his enthusiastic contribution as VFFA's tackle and book auctioneer; his involvement in the tackle industry with the Compleat Angler stores made him ideal for this role. He was also VFFA librarian, following on from Jack Morey. Mart was also a keen supporter of winter casting, supporting VFFA stalwart Malcolm Elms in conducting this popular winter activity.

Marty Rogers was the quintessential outdoor sportsman; game shooting and fly fishing is what he loved, and he was very good at both. I consider myself fortunate to have been the recipient of wild shot rabbits, plump stubble quails, and in-season wild ducks. All game was beautifully cooked in the Rogers'



*Marty with Gary Nuttall (this photo and most others provided by Mike Stevens)*

household, and Marty's 'rabbit in mustard' was much loved by lucky guests.

Mart loved his trout fishing, and I was lucky to share favourite waters with him during the 1960s and 70s. We regularly visited the Goulburn River, Lake Eucumbene in its prime, and the wonderful Monaro streams. During this time Tasmania was discovered too. Southland New Zealand became a favourite destination for Mart, especially when he was able to meet up with his American friend Whitney West. Mart liked to say 'make new friends as you wish, but keep your old ones in good repair.' I found Mart true to his word in this regard. He was a long time, loyal friend.

During his time in the fishing tackle business he became known as a real character who provided genuine old-fashioned customer service. He developed a cult following during his time at the Compleat Flyfisher in Flinders Lane, and there is no better example of this than Kevin Hindle's description of a lunchtime visit to see Marty (VFFA newsletter, July 2008).



*Just some of the many friends of Marty who attended his farewell celebration*

Most people who knew Mart were aware that he was a collector of all things old, providing 'the stuff' (Mart's term) was of interest, and preferably had some age to it (so creating the desirable patina). Mart kept all his collectibles in a specially built room in a shed at the rear of his property, which he called 'The Short Room'. This reference was always obscure to me, even though I was the main player in the building of this construction. This space was secured by the best quality Yale deadlock and only Marty had the key. Not even Mary or his children had access to The Short Room, unless, like myself, they were invited into the inner sanctum. Apart from general 'stuff', Mart collected fishing tackle, especially old English made Hardy brand tackle: reels, rods, nets and all manner of accessories. The key to desirability was 'old'.

When they were first married, Mary and Marty lived in a stable in East Melbourne. Then they moved to Falconer Street, Fitzroy. Sometime before 1973

Marty had a shop in Lygon Street, 'Carlton Colonial' (now a spice shop). I visited there once, but Marty was driving around the state, looking for more 'stuff' for the shop. He'd left his mum in charge. I picked up an item; "How much is this?" "Oh no, I don't think Leslie would want to part with that." "What about this – how much is it?" "Oh no, I don't think Leslie would want to part with that either." This exchange was repeated until, frustrated, I asked if there was actually anything for sale in the shop. After the shop, Mart became a chainman with the government surveyor's office. During this time he became familiar with Corryong and district, and came to enjoy great fishing in the streams thereabouts.

I remember one occasion, staying overnight as a guest at their house in Park Crescent, when before dinner, Mart slipped out to The Short Room and reappeared with various old axe heads, one of which he began sharpening with a pocket oil stone. He loved doing the >>>

same thing with his collection of classic hand-build knives. Mary would be about to serve dinner, but not until the axe head/knife viewing was complete! He told me recently that all his collectibles were only 'stuff' and his kids would get it and do what they liked with it! Perhaps they will.

There are lots more stories I could share. I feel privileged to have known Marty for more than 50 years; as a 'brother of the angle', but best of all, as a loyal, genuine, caring friend. Thank you for all those countless good times, Mart.

*Dermot O'Brien's memories ...*

Never without a roughish hat and often in a country jacket and moleskins, Marty Rogers was born 100 years too late. I always found it easy to imagine him bird shooting or salmon fishing in the Scottish Highlands, or even tracking man-eaters in Rajasthan in the days of the days of the Raj.

But, it is the more immediate past where Marty will be sadly missed. He was our connection to Malcom Gillies, David Scholes, other long passed fly fishermen, the Goulburn, Lake Eucumbene and locations now fished out and too humanized. He had certainly experienced big wild trout and vintage tackle in what was a golden era.

Marty's stories about fishing with Bob Roles, Jim Allen and others have kept us all entertained at many dinners, trips and casting mornings. He was a font of angling knowledge at the Compleat Angler and later the Compleat Flyfisher for many years. It will be hard to forget him showing off a Hardy reel and telling you that it would last a lifetime and was only so-many "bananas."

Or: "You will never own a Ferrari but you can own a Sage Rod."



*Mary, Zack, and Moira all spoke of their memories of Marty*

He did not suffer fools, but to those he deemed genuine and who would go the distance, Marty was generous with his knowledge, stories and often a wicked sense of humour.

His commitment to the VFFA was second to none. He introduced many new members over the years and was the long-term librarian and auctioneer.

The last time I saw him, although unwell and just out of hospital, he was surrounded by family and had met his first grandchild, Henry, that day. Despite that, he was still interested to hear about my latest fishing day and wanted to know what my kids were up to. Whether he was at Sunday casting or Joe's workshop he could revel in the endurance of the mighty seagull (Toyota Hi-lux), a special knife, or his recipe for hare and chocolate.

My sincere sympathy to Mary, Moira, Zack, Chloe and Henry. Marty Rogers was a bobby dazzler.

*Jim Allen shares these thoughts ...*

The editor will no doubt receive many member's anecdotes of their memories of Marty Rogers. I first met him on the Goulburn River in the early 1960s. Dressed in English Tweed, pipe in mouth, plus fours and even more English



*Marty often fished with his great friend Joe Haslauer. They were a well-equipped team.*

than any. He was known as Les Rogers in those days and I called him that, until one day forty years ago he casually remarked to me, his friends called him Marty.

But as all members would know there was probably no one in our Association that was more Australian than Marty Rogers. Colourful, enigmatic, straight as a rifle barrel, fiercely defending what he believed in ... these are the attributes that come to mind as I pen these notes. He worked both casually and fulltime with the Compleat Flyfisher for nearly two decades. Mentoring youngsters, telling war stories, encouraging some customers and scaring the pants of others. He managed the esprit de corps in Tavistock House.

I remember one new young staff member coming in with an ear ring. Mart asked him how long had he been "batting for the other side". The poor kid had to have the remark explained and then was

horrified. Mart just casually carried on: "Only pirates and gays wore ear rings and I hadn't spotted a parrot or an eye patch." In today's much more enlightened age one wouldn't dare be so rude, but I noted that the ear ring was never seen again!

Many fellow members of the Association will miss Marty Rogers deeply. He and I had our differences and our relationship was not without the odd clash of ideas. But he was truly a great VFFA member, and the many of us who joined together in the hotel in Collingwood a few weeks ago to have a drink in memory with his family agreed he was a colourful character in all aspects of his life, whether it be shooting, fishing, cycling or just the mornings at Pellegrini's. They truly broke the mould after Mart was born. We will never again see the likes of Marty Rogers, and many of us consider ourselves privileged to have known him.

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### *Mike Stevens' personal tribute ...*

I spoke with Marty most weeks for a number of years. He always signed off with 'Anything you need from here?' It was a genuine question, not just a flippant remark - he was interested.

When my daughter lived in Melbourne for a couple of years I knew she had Marty to call on if needed, and I knew Marty would be there for her.

We talked a bit of fishing, but always about family and friends - his and mine, and I grew to know his diverse range of friends through these conversations, even though many I had never met.

I first met Marty at Jim Allen's Compleat Flyfisher. Not exactly sure when, but perhaps 25 years ago. He made a visit to 381 Flinders Lane essential if ever I was in Melbourne.

I fished with Marty in Victoria and Tasmania, and had a trip with our sons Hamish and Ned to New Zealand around 2009.

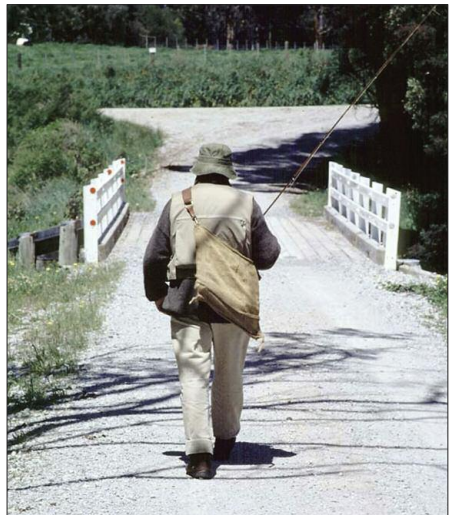
Marty, Joe Haslaeur, Gary and Luke Nutall all shared some fishing in Tasmania with me in recent years, and what grand times they were. Late starts, tiny creeks, lamb chops on the river bank, gin and tonics, red wine, beer and lots of laughs were an essential part of the day. Occasionally a fish was caught - to Marty this was the least important element. He was just as happy to watch a little trout feeding in a stream as he was to fish for it. Marty was stubborn and loyal and would never let his friends down. Look out if you let him down. Although he worked selling fishing tackle for many years he didn't buy new things. Old reels, old cane rods, old shotguns and the famous seagull (Toyota dual cab) were his pride and joy.

He never owned a credit card, cheque book, or mobile phone. He was given a

few phones, but they never lasted. He had a great tackle collection and it meant the world to him - mostly because of the memories associated with the previous custodians.

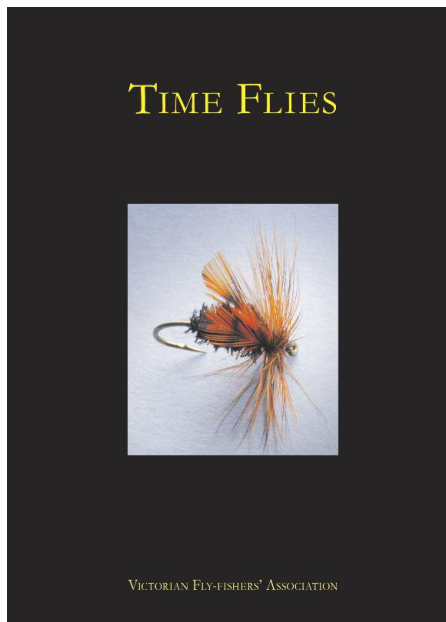
He was probably born 30 years too late and I am sure would have fitted in more easily three decades earlier. David Scholes was his great mate and I remember Marty asking me to bid for David's desk when it was auctioned in an estate sale in Launceston after Scholes' death. Clear instructions were 'buy it'. NO amount was mentioned. So I bought it, and it so happened that Peter Hayes was travelling to Melbourne from Launceston that night in his 4WD on the ferry. We loaded the desk into Peter's 4WD and at 8 o'clock the next morning Peter knocked on Marty's door and asked if he wanted the desk. We laughed about that for years. Marty donated the desk to the Australian Fly Fishing Museum later on, so it is now back in Tasmania.

I loved Marty, his integrity, his values, his caring and his honesty. The world is a much poorer place without him.



*Marty - farewell!*

## 'Time Flies' – the third in the trilogy of VFFA recent publications



With the release of *Time Flies* at the forthcoming Annual Dinner, it completes the third book in the trilogy of books published under the auspices of the VFFA since the first book, *Geehi to Great Lake*, was released in 2007. It is an achievement which the VFFA can justifiably be very proud of.

According to our records, fifty-three members have purchased both of the previously published books. This is an opportunity to purchase the third book in the trilogy, and we can assure you, it will be the same number as the previously published volumes.

The three volumes will make a very handsome edition to any book lovers library, and most particularly, as a member of the VFFA.

Editor Rick Keam adds this note:

*Time Flies: A Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association Fly Box 1932–2015* is an elegant production of 186 pages. There are 37 chapters describing over 60 flies. The flies, beautifully photographed by top Melbourne cameraman Vlad Bunyevich, are presented at angles that capture their individual distinctiveness. Wherever possible, the accompanying descriptions supply information and stories about their creators.

Even for members who don't tie their own flies, *Time Flies* will be a beautiful book to have and to hold, and a treasured memento of our own rich fly-fishing tradition.

*Time Flies* has been produced in two versions - a standard and a limited edition. Both books are hard case bound, the first in black Alb Buckram and the collectors' edition is bound in black Samala book cloth. The first book is printed on 120gsm Colotech paper and the collectors on 140gsm Silk.

Size is similar to previous books and 148mm x 210mm in size, and 186 pages. They are gold foil embossed on front and spine with an inlaid photo on the front.

### ***The Two Earlier Books***

Some copies of *Geehi to Great Lake* and *The Country For An Angler* are still available. Members who would like to purchase copies, or additional copies, of these very popular books should contact Peter Boag on 0408 711 946, or email him on [pboag46@gmail.com](mailto:pboag46@gmail.com).

## The Inaugural Bruce Whitehead Annual Trophy Fish-Off

Saturday, July 30, and Sunday, July 31, was the weekend of the inaugural Western Lakes Winter Competition between the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers and the VFFA. Accordingly, representatives from the two teams met at the Ballarat Fly Fishing Club clubrooms on Lake Wendouree on the Friday evening, where, according to Mike Jarvis, they were met and made very welcome by members of the Ballarat Club.

The original plan had been to fish Lake Fyans in the far west of the state, but reports on Fyans had indicated that it wasn't fishing well, so lakes around Ballarat were chosen instead.

The Bairnsdale team numbered nine, and were led by Bairnsdale President Mick Rosenboom. They were contending with the VFFA team, whose representatives included Mike Jarvis, Terry Rogers, Richard Kos, Rick Dugina, Bruce Houghton, and Peter Clayton. To bolster the VFFA side with some impressive talent and local knowledge Trevor Hawkins and Mick Hall, VFFA members who live in Ballarat, stepped up too.

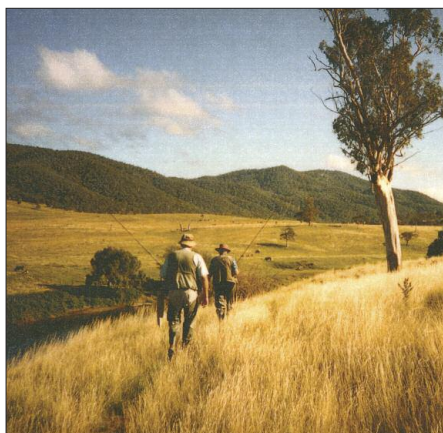
The two teams shared meals together on the Friday and Saturday evenings, and apparently these were very friendly and convivial occasions, with no contestants even looking like failing any blood tests.

The actual fishing took place on the Saturday (all day) and Sunday morning, with local waters including Wendouree, Newlyn, Dean, Wombat and Mooroolbong being fished. Unfortunately the weather was diabolical – gale force winds, sleeting rain, and air temperatures around the 3°C mark. But the teams battled on courageously, with Mick Rosenboom catching the only fish landed

by the Bairnsdale boys, and Trevor Hawkins pulling in the only fish caught by the VFFA team. So as the result was to be determined by the number of fish caught, the event was declared a draw.

Details of the competition are still being sorted, but it will be a Western Lakes Winter Competition with the two teams competing for the 'Bruce Whitehead Annual Trophy'. Discussions on the nature of the actual trophy are continuing, and a piece of timber from the original Bairnsdale Lodge has been acquired and will be used to manufacture a trophy for what is to become an annual event.

While the weather was foul the weekend was regarded as a huge success socially, and both teams wish to thank the Ballarat members for their very warm hospitality, and particularly Trevor Hawkins, who spent a lot of time in organising the event.



*Mitta Mitta February 94 – Dudley Lee & Bruce Whitehead*

# The Season Outlook for Tasmania

... from John Diggle, Director of Inland Fisheries, Tasmania

The brown trout season commences on August 6 this year and the outlook is very good, following the dramatic shift from critically dry to very wet conditions since May.

Over the 2015-16 season conditions were tough with a very dry spring, summer and early autumn. The State faced an energy crisis due to the dry conditions, exacerbated by the failure of the Basslink Interconnector that joins Tasmania's energy supply to the big island. As a consequence many Hydro Tasmania storages were depleted, with boat launching a challenge. And topping this off we experienced some of the worst bushfires for many years in the remote western regions.

Then, as if someone flicked a switch, things changed at the start of May, with heavy rain in the west followed in June by major flooding in the Central Highlands and northern river basins. The Mersey River flooded, ravaging farm land, roads and bridges, with the Kimberley to Latrobe section particularly hard hit. The same rain event saw yingina/Great Lake rise by one metre in a day and the Ouse River go over the bridge on the Marlborough Road between Miena and Little Pine Lagoon. The contrast in climatic conditions could not have been more extreme!

It's now the middle of July as I write this, and most water storages across the state are spilling, from Lake Burbury on the west coast to Tooms Lake in the east. Many rivers are also in spate, which augurs well for the trout season ahead.

Popular waters, including Great Lake, Woods Lake, Arthurs Lake, Lake Burbury,

Lake King William, Tooms Lake, Lake Leake, Lake Dulverton, and Craigbournne Dam have all recovered in level and look set for a bumper season. Other fisheries such as Bronte Lagoon, Four Springs Lake, Little Pine Lagoon, Penstock Lagoon and Lake Crescent went through the dry period without issue and are also expected to benefit from the wetter conditions and should fire from the opening.

The Western lakes regions has received a massive amount of rain. This has flooded vast areas and should result in a major redistribution of fish and a strong recruitment year which will underpin trout populations over the next three or four seasons. With flood foraging available, fish condition is expected to be very good.

There has been much talk about the performance of the Arthurs Lake fishery since the drought broke in 2009. For various reasons there has been a rise in nutrient levels and turbidity in the lake, along with very limited mayfly hatches that has diminished the dry fly fishing for which Arthurs is famous. This is thought to relate to a slow recovery of macrophyte beds offset by phytoplankton productivity and an associated lag in the macro-invertebrate populations that deliver the sought after dry fly fishing experience.

Trout are still present in the lake, though reduced in average size. This is most likely due to over recruitment in the high inflow years of 2009 – 2012. Lure fishers fishing deep have caught good bags of fish at times, and given that the water levels have held up and should do so for the next three years or so we expect

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that Arthurs Lake will steadily improve over the period, returning to its former standing as the premier trout fishery in Tasmania.

The Lake Crescent trout fishery was a standout big fish water in 2015-16, and given that the water level has held up and inundated the productive marsh areas it will produce some massive trout this season, possibly up to 10 kg. Tooms Lake will also be a trophy trout water in the coming season, as when IFS sampled it in 2015 an average fish was 2 kg with one fish sampled weighing in at 5 kg. This lake fell to an almost unfishable level last summer, but is now spilling over. It is expected that the galaxias population will explode on the back of the wet, driving the growth rate of the big wild browns even higher, so definitely one to try before summer if you get the chance. Another fishery on the watch list for bigger than average trout is Lake Leake. It had some solid fish landed in 2015 and may surprise a few anglers this season.

Tasmania has many underrated and under fished fisheries that can provide good fishing if you are prepared to look past the more famous waters. There are huge trout populations in lakes Pedder,

King William and Burbury, and great fishing can also be had in places such as Lake St Clair, Lake Plimsoll and Lake Mackintosh. If you do want to try somewhere new, or if you're new to the Tasmanian fishery, then consider hiring a guide and pick their brains for tips on how, where and when, and give yourself the best chance of a great fishing experience.

Depending on rainfall for the rest of winter and spring, rivers will provide another great fishing opportunity in the coming season. Whitebait runs start in August and run through until Christmas and can provide exciting fishing in the estuaries and lower reaches of major rivers. This type of fishing is reliable in the River Derwent, Huon River, Pieman River, Mersey River, Inglis River and many more right around the state, with opportunities often available close to major population centres.

If you want to know more or simply want to pass on your experience, then visit the website ([www.ifs.tas.gov.au](http://www.ifs.tas.gov.au)), ring or email on 1300INFISH or [infish@ifs.tas.gov.au](mailto:infish@ifs.tas.gov.au). We sincerely value your feedback.



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## Purrumbete Trip in October

A trip to Lake Purrumbete, near Camperdown in the Western District, is being organised by John Permewan for the weekend Friday, October 7, to Sunday, October 9. John has organised accommodation in cabins with ensuites at the Purrumbete Caravan Park located at the lake. Members who arrive on the Friday are invited to meet at the corner hotel in Camperdown for a meal together. On the Saturday evening a more casual meal will be held at the caravan park which has a large covered outdoor eating area with cooking facilities.

Members who would like to participate in this trip should phone John on mobile 0413 008 068 to confirm their interest and obtain further details.

## Warrnambool FFC Annual Dinner ...

July 23 was the date for the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club's justly famous Annual Game Dinner, and a smallish contingent off VFFA representatives made the trek. Bruce and Anne Houghton, Stan and Deirdre Lancaster, Corey Houghton and friend Brona Walsh, and Lyndon Webb all shared a table among the 72 members and guests present, this being one of the largest attendances for many years.

The function was held in the Matilda Room at the Warrnambool Racing Club, where guests were first presented with deep-fried crumbed abalone, then four entrees - Game Soup, Battered Bream, Smoked Trout and Smoked Eel, and Hare and Duck Terrine with Woodford Crabapple Jelly. The main course was again Grilled Kangaroo Sirloin, and tea or

coffee with a Cheese Platter and Woodford Quince Paste completed the night.

The food for the evening (fish, duck, abalone, bream,...) was all collected in the months prior to the dinner by the very active and enterprising team of Warrnambool fly fishers lead by President Adrian Jacobs. Well known Warrnambool top angler Jim Blakeslee is also at the forefront in this food gathering exercise, and most of the abalone was supplied through his efforts.

Jim also managed to provide many of the large browns that were subsequently smoked for the dinner. So it was no great surprise when the Arthur Hogan Trophy for the largest trout caught in local waters was presented to Jim as the winner - for the 14th time.

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*Another well-attended Warrnambool Game Dinner*



*Chef Robert King received an award recognising his 20 years preparing the game dinners*



*Jim Blakeslee again won the Arthur Hogan trophy for the largest trout caught in local waters*

During the evening the Geoff O'Brien Memorial Trophy for the best selection of flies tied by a WFFC member was awarded this year to Warrnambool FFC Treasurer Peter Hussey. Trout fishing wasn't happening through the winter months, but Peter used his fly tying and fishing skills to fish the Hopkins River estuary in the weeks before the dinner to catch the bream for the entree. The annual dinner really is the result of the work of a very keen and industrious team.

During the evening chef Robert King, who has prepared the game dinners for 20 years, was presented with a certificate acknowledging his years 20 years of involvement.

Bob Loch, a well-known local VFFA member, had not been well and thus missed his first annual dinner in many years. Our best wishes are with Bob, and we trust he makes a rapid and complete recovery from the bug that has laid him low.

Our congratulations to all those at Warrnambool involved in the preparation and organisation of the dinner. It remains a very special event in the VFFA calendar.



*Corey Houghton and Brona Walsh enjoyed the occasion*



*Stan and Deirdre Lancaster thoroughly enjoyed the evening too*



# And Along Came A Spider – Part 1

... from our very busy UK correspondent, Philip Bailey.

Fly fishing is a funny pastime, with its participants often too quick to discard long established methods in favour of new ideas - ideas that are born from a desire to create something new and which we believe will be more effective than the past.

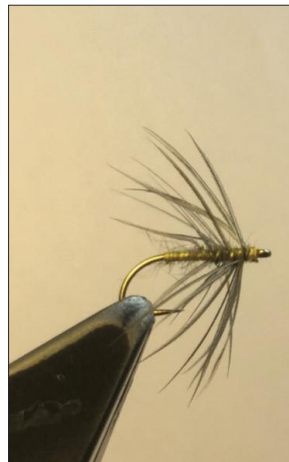
And thus it has been with the traditional ways of fishing small wet flies. How quickly we have discarded techniques that called for controlled searching of waters using wet flies designed to deceive fish. I am talking here about soft hackled flies. Yes, there are still stalwarts amongst us who use nothing else, and others who mix them in with their own personal approaches. But many of us have discarded them entirely in preference for weighted flies and dry flies mixed with emerger patterns tied more like a dry fly. I don't criticise anglers who seek to develop their fishing techniques, but I do ask: "Are we throwing babies out with the bath water?"

As it happens, tying and fishing soft hackled flies is having something of a resurgence, with recent articles on the subject appearing in some high quality publications. I even got on the bandwagon some years ago with a self-published book on how to fish them. I admit that I loved tying them and fishing them, but like others, I stepped away when I developed an interest in the use of short rods and specialist casts based on the modern Italian style of fishing, a style that was developed for fishing dry flies in difficult situations.

But the call of the soft hackles continually beckoned me, and I began to ponder how I could merge my love of the Italian style with those soft hackled flies tied in the

North Country style. It was because of this that I turned to Stewart's *The Practical Angler*. W.C. Stewart, a Scotsman living near and fishing the Tweed and its tributaries, wrote *The Practical Angler* in 1857, with a later edition being released in 1905 by the publishers A & C Black. Stewart was perhaps the first to describe in detail the methods used when fishing small soft hackled flies.

Nowadays we tend to describe soft hackled flies as 'spiders', lumping together all manner of tying styles and patterns. But are there differences? I believe so. Stewart didn't name the style of flies that he used but he did coin the term 'spider'. His chapters on flies (chapter V) and how to fish them (chapter VI) are the most enlightening I have read on the subject, and probably equal to anything written since. It is in these chapters that he explains his techniques (and he even takes Francis Francis on – true Scottish spirit).



*Traditional  
North  
Country Fly –  
Waterhen  
Bloa*

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*Stewart's (James Baillie) style of tying the same fly*

"There is the winged fly, which alone, properly speaking, merits appellation; and there is the palmer hackle, or spider, by which we call it, believing that if it resembles anything in the insect tribe, it is a spider". There you have it. From that point onward Stewart called these small palmered flies 'spiders'. But he did not originate them; James Baillie did. Baillie was a professional fisherman, so imagine the thinking and testing that must have gone on during his days catching trout for a living in order to move from a traditional hackled fly to a palmered pattern. The point here is that Stewart's spiders contained a palmered hackle technique - something which did not feature in North Country, Clyde or even Tummel flies. I like to keep the terminology accurate, so call them for what they are - North Country Style, Clyde Style, Tummel Style and Stewart style (aka spiders).

It was from those two chapters of Stewart's book that I developed my technique of using soft hackles with a short rod (and I am talking here of a 7'6" rod), with fast, tight loops and a variety

of casts for shooting flies into difficult places or achieving drag free drifts in the Italian style.

Stewart talks about three essentials when describing his style. First, he advocates a light stiff rod of about 10' length. A stiff rod enabled Stewart to stop the cast abruptly in order for "the flies to fall first on the water". This is exactly what we want to achieve with the Italian style.

He also fished a cast made up of three flies, with "droppers from two and a half to three inches" to avoid tangling when using a stiffer rod and faster casting. Now I had a reason and some justification for fishing more than a single fly when casting in the Italian style.

Finally he advised casting upstream with short accurate casts, allowing the flies to only drift a short distance and with the least amount of drag possible. He also goes on to describe how to cover the water. All this is in harmony with the Italian style.

Armed with these insights and the skills I acquired through becoming an instructor in the Italian style where a short rod, light lines, high speed casts and a long leader are used, I set about working out how I could fish multiple soft hackles with Italian style techniques. Eighteen months now along that journey I think I have it sorted. I can now fish two soft hackles (three is a step too far for this style) whilst working all of the pocket water, creases, back eddies and riffles where these flies are so effective.

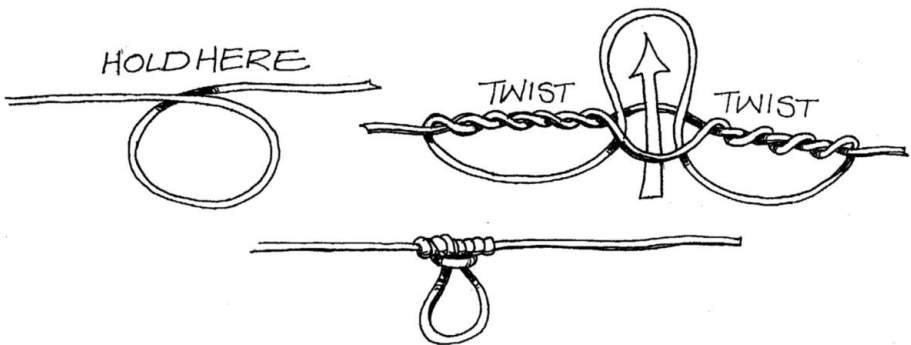
So what have I changed? Not too much really. Just a better understanding of leader design and dropper length. Oh, and reducing the number of droppers from two to one. The most fundamental change has been in the dropper length, now kept to no more than 4.0 cm and using an extension of the old 'dropper

knot'. This means I don't have to rebuild the tippet section of my leader each time I want to change the dropper fly. And as Stewart said: "We believe that the angler who has a different fly for every day in the season will kill nearly as many trout as the angler who adheres to three or four varieties the whole season through; but he is proceeding upon an erroneous principle, and losing both labour and time". So I don't change my dropper much.

Here is my leader set up: the butt is 135 cm of 0.50mm, then 67 cm of 0.40mm, 45 cm of 0.30mm, 23 cm of 0.20mm, then a tippet 100 cm. I tie the butt and first two sections in Maxima Chameleon, the third section in a clear tippet material which has a very small perfection loop at the end. I use three turn blood knots on all connections except the last, which is a four turn blood knot. The small Perfection Loop allows me to change the tippet without reducing that section's length. You could use a micro ring - which I originally used but have since discarded. For the tippet I use

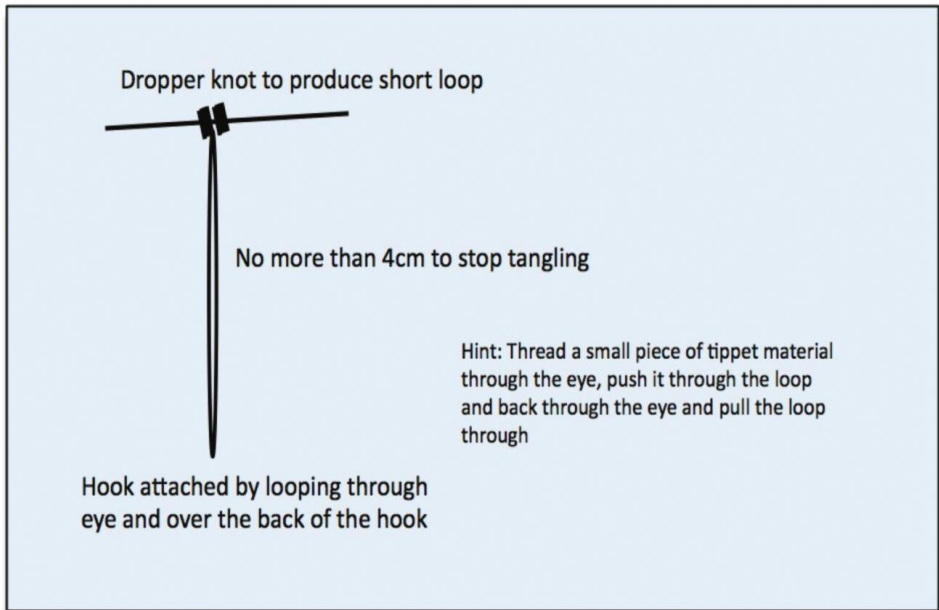
fluorocarbon, 100 cm of 5x or 6x, and I place the dropper 50 cm from the point. I attach the tippet to the perfection loop using a clinch knot, and attach the point fly using a Davy Knot.

The real difference is with the dropper. In old books there are various explanations of how to attach droppers to a leader. One which prompted my thinking was the tying of a small loop in the leader to which a dropper was attached. The question I had was this: could I do this in a way that produced a short dropper, and if so would the double thickness allow the dropper and the fly to reduce tangles? It is a little fiddly to tie but it works, and the extra stiffness does not impede the action of the fly. To attach the fly I thread the dropper through the eye and double it over behind the eye. But a warning - I have found the double thickness difficult to push through the hook eye so I simply push a piece of tippet through the eye, then through the loop and back through the eye and then pull the whole lot through.



*Diagram to form the dropper loop taken from an old book.  
What I am trying to achieve.*

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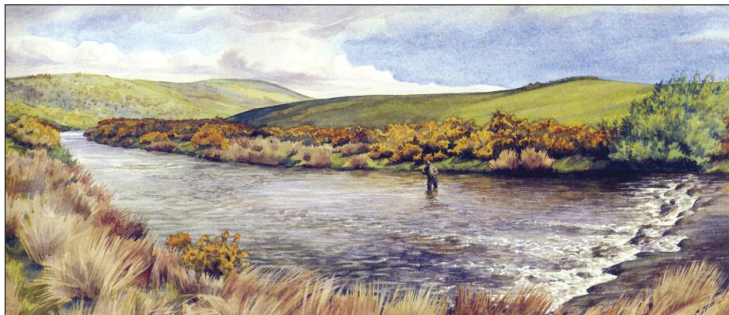


I have tried longer and shorter leaders but this set up now works extremely well for my new style. Longer leaders produce tangles, and shorter ones mitigate against a natural drift. You might think the section lengths a little pedantic, but it works for me.

Do I get tangles? I do, but no more than I got when fishing a longer rod with three flies and longer droppers. Multiple flies are always going to tangle. But my catch

rate has increased as I fish these wonderful lightly dressed flies with renewed keenness, short casting accurately and getting two flies in under bushes, dangling tantalisingly in pockets and eddies and slipping along in the current without any drag.

In Part two, in a future issue, I'll discuss how I now fish North Country flies and spiders.



*Tichborne watercolour – Waipai River*

## The Australian Trout Foundation (ATF) at Warrnambool

The The Australian Trout Foundation, under the leadership of President Terry George, a VFFA member, has been particularly active this year. Among a number of other projects, some money was spent acquiring 10 Jordan Scotty Incubators from Canada. These are similar to the old Vibert boxes used for incubating trout eggs in rivers. But the new Jordan Scotty Incubators are a much more advanced piece of technology. Each box holds 1,000 fertilized eggs, and the tiny hatched trout can't escape into the current until they have totally consumed their eggs sacs.

Five of these Incubators were taken by Terry a few weeks ago to Warrnambool, where a small team including Peter Hussey and Jim Blakeslee from the Warrnambool FFC worked to bury the fully loaded incubators in a site on the Hopkins River. Unfortunately the river was high from recent rain and visibility very poor, but the team worked hard and buried the boxes in a gravelly section. The eggs were only a few days short of hatching and provided all goes well they represent 5,000 brown trout released into the upper Hopkins.



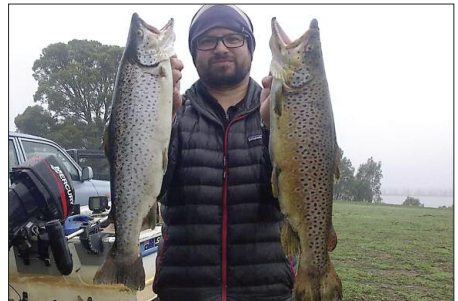
*ATF President Terry George travelled to Warrnambool to help install the incubators in the Hopkins River*

The plan is to use the other five boxes at a suitable site in one of our rivers in the north-east. Terry met with Lyndon Webb, Dermot O'Brien and Dallas D'Silva (General Manager, VRFish) recently to discuss possible future ATF projects.

The issue of stocking trout into rivers in Victoria is vexing, with experts on both sides expressing strong views. There is good science to suggest that if left to it (in theory) the fish will restock the rivers themselves through natural spawning. But those who favour some strategic stocking want action a bit sooner and feel that some of our rivers cop so much pressure over the summer months, with the likely removal of many of the required breeders, that they would benefit from a bit of Hatchery help. The Nariel Creek is one such, as is the lower Buckland. The Ovens was stocked, and is now probably the most productive of our north-east rivers.

The Incubators are a possible compromise, as both sides see some merit in their use. We'll keep you posted.

In the meantime, Dallas D'Silva has been visiting Lake Toolondo in the far west. Toolondo was desperately low, so hopefully the recent rains have helped. But despite the low level the lake is still fishing well. Dallas was keen to show us the two magnificent fish he landed while there.



*Dallas with his two magnificent browns from Lake Toolondo*

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *The Etrick Nymph (... from David Martin)*



In the very popular book *Australia's Best Trout Flies*, compiled by Malcolm Crosse and edited by Robert Sloane, the chapter by Mick Hall includes a fly he describes as the Big Nymph, which he indicates is also called the Etrick Nymph by some, after a lake of the same name in Victoria's western district. David Martin, a VFFA member living in Ballarat, has written a note that may clarify this issue. He recently posted your editor three very interesting nymphs in a small plastic container, along with the following information.

The nymphs David posted to me were samples of the original Etrick Nymph which David says were given to him by a local fly fisher in the late 1950s. The fly was popularised by local fly fisher and club member, the late Artie McAdam, and successfully fished by Ballarat club members at Lake Fyans to winter rainbows.

### **Materials needed:**

- Hook:** Patridge long shank, sizes 6, 8, 10 (preferably a straight eye hook).
- Thread:** 6/0 or 8/0, olive for the body, and black for the head
- Tail:** Olive hen hackle fibres
- Body:** Olive seals fur (or olive synthetic dubbing – see note later)
- Rib:** Copper wire from a pot scrubber
- Thorax:** Some turns of fine lead wire or copper wire to add weight. These are then covered with olive seals fur (or again olive synthetic dubbing)
- Head:** black thread

## Typing Procedure:

1. Put the hook in the vice and tie on some turns of lead or copper wire to add weight. Wrap these turns on the shank just behind the eye in the area where the thorax will later be added, but leaving a centimetre of clear space behind the eye to later tie in the head.
2. Run some olive thread along the shank, starting behind the eye and finishing at the bend of the shank.
3. Take 8 or 10 olive hen hackle fibres and tie them in to form the tail. The tail should be about the same length as the hook shank.
4. Also tiny in a short length of the copper ribbing at this point.
5. Add some dubbing wax to the thread, then take a small amount of olive seals fur and dub it along the thread to create a thin rope.
6. Wrap the dubbed seals fur around the shank to form the body of the nymph.
7. Wrap four turns of the copper wire around the body to form the rib. Tie off the copper rib at the point where the thorax will start.
8. Now add some more olive seals fur to the thread and wrap it around the shank to form the thorax of the nymph.
9. Tie a couple of half hitches with the olive thread just behind the eye, then cut off the olive thread.
10. Tie in some black thread and build up a small black head. Then whip finish the black thread and cut it off. Add a drop of varnish to the head.
11. Tease out some of the seals fur using an original suede brush or some Velcro to make the nymph a little more buggy looking.

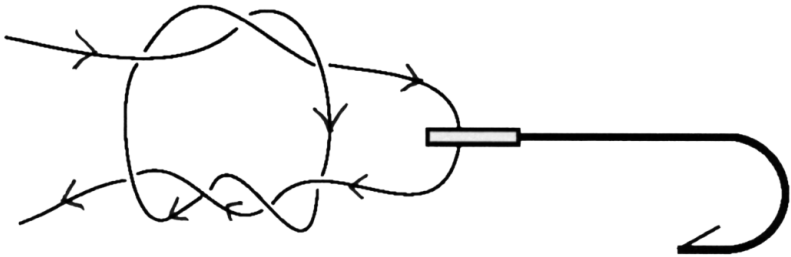
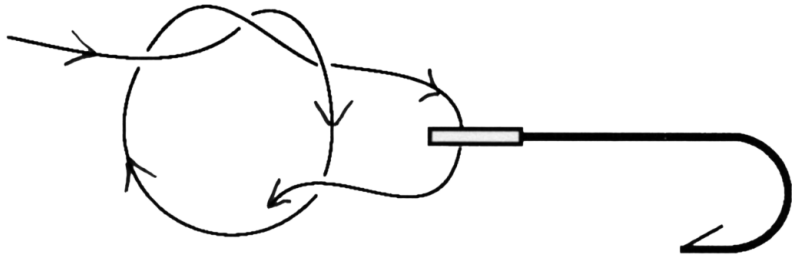
Note: the olive seals fur originally used for this fly was natural seals fur dyed with Dolly hot water dyes – number 36 (Sherwood Green) and number 7 (dark brown), mixed together in equal amounts. Small amounts of seals fur in the colours yellow, red, and blue were then mixed in to enhance the ‘haze’ surrounding the fly as it sank through the water column. The hen feathers used for the tail were dyed similarly.

David mentions that seals fur was used in the original fly when it was developed some 60 years ago. Attitudes to conservation have changed since then, however, and many of the currently available synthetic materials would undoubtedly adequately replace the seals fur. He also suggests that he is at a loss as to why this pattern attracts large fish as it does. Perhaps this is because the fly is often fished at the beginning and end of the season, when there is a paucity of aquatic life. Or perhaps it's slim appearance mimics the silhouette of many forms of aquatic life, such as damsel and dragonfly larva, stone fly nymphs, some shrimps and crustaceans, perhaps even minnows too. David tends to target weed beds and underwater structure as this is where large fish tend to lurk. He tells us to be exceptionally vigilant at the ‘drop’ and ‘lift’ as he believes many fish are lost at these points. So - at the slightest movement of the line – strike immediately.

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A final point – this nymph works better if it is tied onto the tippet using a loop knot.

Below is a diagram of a simple loop knot given in the February 2016 issue of the UK magazine *Fly Fishing and Fly Tying*.



So there you go – a simple granny knot, then take the end of the tippet through the eye of the hook, then a one turn wrap over the bottom loop, and tighten.





# 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 or one of his assistants 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 2015 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Andrew Braithwaite Fishing Gear • Armadale Angling •
- Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery • FlyLife Publishing •
- FlyFinz Fishing Tackle and Books • Gavin Hurley's Fly Fishing Pro-Angler •
- Hayes On Brumbys • J.M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall • Millbrook  
Lakes Lodge • Mountain Stream Company • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies •
- Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Compleat Angler Box Hill • The Flyfisher Tackle  
Store Melbourne • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle •

## VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

### August

- 7 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool
- 14 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool
- 15 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 21 Sunday Casting – 10:00 AM - Noon at Red Tag Pool
- 26 Friday Annual Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 PM  
*'Time Flies'* book launch – Rick Keam  
Guest speakers: Travis Dowling and Anthony Forster,  
from Fisheries Victoria
- 27 Saturday President's Casting Day – 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM at the Red Tag Pool

### September

- 3 Saturday 12 midnight – rivers again open to trout fishing
- 5 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 22 Thursday Annual General Meeting – 8:00 PM

### October

- 2 Sunday Latrobe Valley VFFA Dam Day at Thorpdale
- 7 – 9 Trip to Purrumbete, staying at Purrumbete Caravan Park
- 16 Sunday Calder Fly Fishing Association Open Day at Woodend
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM  
Gavin Hurley – Fishing Guide and Tackle Retailer
- 24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM

### November

- 4 – 6 Annual Warrnambool Trip – details TBC
- 17 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
- 21 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM