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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

DECEMBER 2012

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

www.vffa.org.au

December Christmas Dinner

Thursday, December 13, 6:30 pm for 7:00 pm at the Celtic Club

At this year's Christmas Dinner we will be acknowledging and honouring our long-standing members. We have seven colleagues who have been members for 50 years or longer, and more than 50 who have been members for 25 or more years. To acknowledge these years of membership two special VFFA badges have been struck, and the 50 year members will also receive a certificate to mark the occasion.

Our speakers for the Christmas Dinner will include some long-standing members who have been invited to share memories of their fly-fishing exploits and any special memories of their years in the Association.

All members are invited, but if you haven't yet completed and posted your acceptance form back to the Treasurer, please do so promptly. A copy of the form is included as an insert in this newsletter.



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Advance Notice – the February 2013 ‘Liars’ and Slide Night’

Thursday February 28, 2013, will be our next general meeting, and the first in the new year. Note that this one is on the **fourth** Thursday of the month and not on the usual third Thursday. Why? Because on Thursday February 21 lots of our members will still be in Tassie, enjoying Peter Hayes’s hospitality. And we do want to hear their tall tales and true don’t we.

So February 28 at 8 pm it is, preceded of course by dinner at the Celtic Club for those who enjoy a good meal in the company of fellow members.

And another change – our traditional ‘Liars’ Night’ will offer the opportunity for contributors to back up their stories with some photographic evidence. In other words members who have exciting reports of their exploits over recent months are invited to show three or four (note – three or four, not three or four hundred) recent photos to illustrate their experiences. How do we manage this? Those who have photos as digital files (ie taken on a digital camera – and that’s nearly all of them these days) should email their selection to the editor (editor@vffa.org.au) who will bring contributions to the meeting on one of those USB memory sticks. Those who have printed photos they would like to show are welcome to post these to the editor who will scan them and then return them.

As always, this will be a great night with some fabulous stories told, top secret fishing spots possibly revealed, and lots of laughs and great entertainment.

Mark this event in your diary – Thursday February 28, 2013.

Donger Weekend

Members are reminded that it is now some years since the VFFA wrested the Donger from the locals down there at Bairnsdale. We need to make a determined bid to win it back next February. Let’s have a strong representation of members there to mount a serious challenge.

The date - February 15 – 17, 2013. The venue – Bairnsdale for the Annual Dinner, then up to the Bairnsdale Club Lodge on the Mitta Mitta River for some serious fishing.

New Member Welcomed ...

This month it is our great pleasure to welcome Peter Clayton as a new member. We trust that his membership of the Association brings many years of pleasurable involvement and enjoyment.

The November Meeting with Gavin Hurley

Gavin Hurley, Managing Director of the Pro Angler tackle stores, was guest speaker at the November general meeting, and his talk focused on the various fishing trips that the Pro Angler stores organize. Gavin used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the various destinations that are available for anglers to visit, and the venues portrayed certainly fired imaginations and wetted appetites of the 30 members present.



Gavin in action

The first trip that Gavin described was to Kiribati, or as it is more commonly known, Christmas Island, where the target species is bonefish. These days Air Pacific provides good reliable and comfortable flights via Fiji to get you there. When you arrive you find that the day temperatures are consistently about 30°C and the wind gets up most days after 11 am. Here you will find the best sand flats fishing in the world. Pro Angler groups stay at Ikari House, which provides the best accommodation on the island - right on the water and only two minutes walk to the boats.

Anglers in Pro Angler parties are transported in air-conditioned buses to the various fishing locations. Bonefish are an amazing species. They have dark green backs but when they turn side on they are beautifully camouflaged and very difficult to see. But the guides are very skilled and have a wonderful ability see the fish in the water. The general instruction for new comers is to 'just do as you're told – cast when you're told to where you're told, and strike when you're told'. Anglers don't need many flies, as crabs and mantra shrimp are the main food eaten by the bonefish, so you only need a couple of patterns and these should be sparsely dressed.



When hooked a 5 lb bonefish will run 130 or more metres on the first run, and will probably do this at least another two times. You can't stop them even when using 20 lb tippets.

After a couple of days you will learn to spot the fish. Trevally and other species can also be caught there, but these can take up to 30 minutes to land, so anglers generally try to avoid them because the bonefish are more exciting. The best technique is to cast way ahead of the fish and let them find the fly. They are very easy to spook and in this respect are similar to trout. However they are terrible



to eat, so there's every good reason for putting them back. Other fish caught there include GTs, tuna, and sailfish in the months June through to August. A seven day trip to this venue costs \$3,999 all-inclusive, and while most trips are planned for just the one week, two-week trips to Christmas Island are being considered. Usually trips are planned around neap tides because then there is not much tidal movement. Anglers in Pro Angler groups can expect to be casting at between 100 and 150 bonefish each day.

The next trip Gavin described was to the South Island of New Zealand, with its crystal clear rivers and huge fish. The Pro Angler parties stay at Nokamai Station and use New Zealand accredited guides. The weather in the South Island can change quickly and is quite variable, so good quality waders and warm clothing are essential. The big and usually fast-flowing rivers need careful wading, but the buddy system with two anglers locked together makes it much safer and manageable. Most of the fishing involves using small flies – typically sizes 16 and 18 nymphs and dry flies, except of course for when the cicadas are around.

The guides in New Zealand find that the rainbow trout hold in the faster water whilst the browns tend to remain in the slack water along the edges of rivers. The fish are very spooky and the most common strategy is to try to spot fish in the clear water before casting to them, rather than simply blind searching. Six weight rods are ideal. Most rivers carry fish in the size range 3 lb to 5 lb while larger waters such as the Oreti hold fish in the 6-10 lb range. Arriving and leaving on a Saturday, anglers get the full six days fishing plus some amazing evening rises. All trips include at least four days with kiwi guides and two days with your Pro Angler hosts who know the rivers really well. Prices include everything except the airfares and New Zealand fishing licences.

The Southland trips cost \$2,999 for seven days and are held in October and November and then again in March and April of each year. There are also trips to the West Coast rivers, where the groups stay at Lake Brunner, which is itself a fabulous brown trout fishery. These trips include lots of fishing on various spring creeks. In this area fish of 9 – 10 lb are common and those who wish to can take helicopter rides into less accessible rivers. The West Coast South Island trips also cost \$2,999 all-inclusive.

Tasmania was then discussed, where Pro Angler use the guiding skills of Roger Butler. Much of the fishing is dry fly fishing on rivers that are relatively untouched, as well as trips up to the Western Lakes. The fishing can also include fishing out of boats, casting to sighted and

rising fish. The dawn patrol at first light is a popular way to find fish eating the previous night's midges. Tasmanian trips occasionally include visits to the private fishery at Currawong near Lake Leake. Currawong is an excellent fishery with lots of fish. A three-day trip to Tasmania costs \$1,299 and the seven-day trip is \$2,399.

The Pro Angler trips to Chile take anglers into countryside that is simply breathtaking, and the food and accommodation are top class. Clients will fish rivers similar in some respects to our Yarra, but which hold fish up to 6 lb. Much of the fishing is done in the Coyhaique area and the diversity in and around this area is truly amazing. There are lots of rivers to fish, though many need drift boats or rafts. Raft trips typically involve a magnificent barbecue lunch with all the trimmings. Chile also offers plenty of other attractions for the wives of anglers who are accompanying their husbands.

Anglers should plan to combine both wade fishing and float trips over the course of several days. There is float and wade fishing on the famous Rio Simpson which features miles of excellent water and consistent hatches. In the midsummer there is hopper fishing for voracious brown trout on the many rivers and spring creeks. In one respect it is very different to Australia, in that the locals don't fish much and visiting anglers are unlikely to see many other anglers on the river. A river similar in size to the Rubicon will yield 60 - 100 fish per day in sizes up to 4 or 5 lb. There are also several lakes in the area holding double-digit rainbow and brown trout. These trips are organised for October to mid-December and again in late February to the end of April. The lodges are in the mountains and seven nights with six guided days will cost an angler \$3299.

Finally - Alaska, the last frontier. The Alaskan trip provides world-class fly-fishing for five salmon species along with rainbow trout, char, grayling and pike. The Alagnak River inside the National Park is located 40 miles north-east of the town of King Salmon and is only accessible by float plane, and of course has fabulous fishing right at the lodge. The eight river front cabins accommodate 16 guests comfortably and the 160 acres and 3,800 feet of private river front on the wild and scenic Alagnak River allows anglers to experience Alaska without the crowds. Fly-fishers will fish to several different salmon species, and the lake trout here are huge.



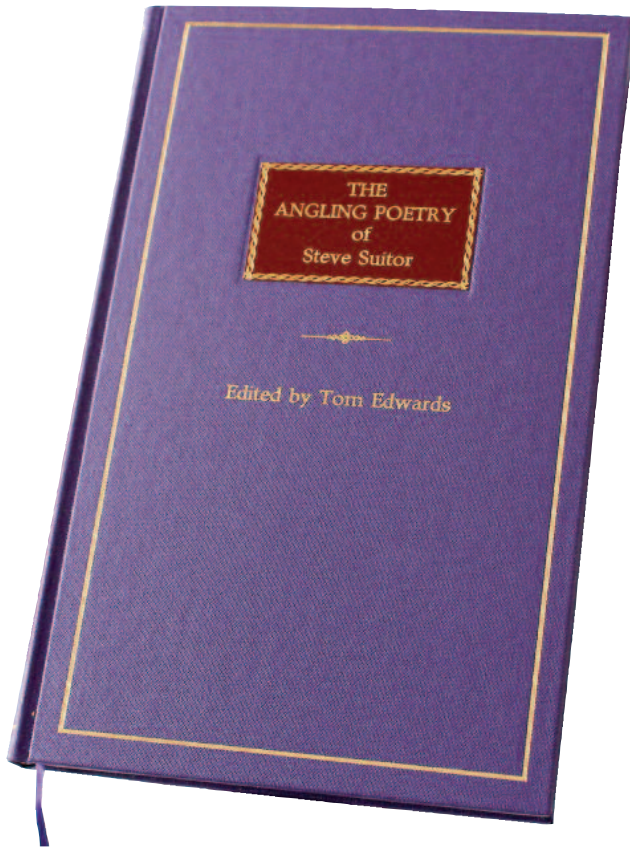
Members enjoyed a quiet meal at the Celtic Club prior to the meeting

Costs depend on flights which can vary between \$1,800 to \$2,500, with the total cost around \$5,400 for seven days of guided fishing which is likely to include fishing for several species of salmon plus steelhead trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, and even the odd bear. These trips are mainly in June and July. Anglers fishing in this area need to take 7 - 9 weight rods and normally use floating lines. The river at the lodges is medium-sized and fast running, but most of the fishing is done on small islands while wading off shallow gravel bars.

In conclusion Gavin's advice was "don't wait until it is too late".

Gone Fishin'

(A poem by Steve Suitor. A book of Steve's delightful and intriguing fishing poetry has just been presented to the VFFA by Tom Edwards. It will be a great addition to our library. And we have permission to use Steve's poems. Here is the first – which of course in no way portrays any known VFFA members.)



The gate is off its hinges
And the hedge is overgrown,
The garden should be weeded
And the front lawn should be mown.
Gone fishin'

The spouting paint is peeling
And you can't get in the shed,
The pot plants all look sickly
And the roses are all dead.
Gone fishin'

There's a tile loose there on the roof,
The canary will not sing,
The dog is scratching at his fleas
And the doorbell doesn't ring.
Gone fishin'

The outside light has blown a globe
And there's a broken window pane,
There's a wasp nest on the verandah
And a blocked up kitchen drain.
Gone fishin'

The hot water cylinder has sprung a leak,
The clothes line's on a lean,
The back fence needs replacing
And the pool is going green.
Gone fishin'

The bills just keep on coming
And the car is up on blocks,
The wife won't stop complaining
That her jewellery is in hock.
Gone fishin'

I've lost my driver's licence
And my employer has gone bust,
When the police come looking for me
You can tell them that I've just
Gone fishin'

President's Message

Since the last Newsletter the Association, through the efforts of Hugh Maltby and the Warrnambool boys, has conducted a very successful weekend in the west of the state. Special thanks again must go to Jim Blakeslee and his wife Tricia for their wonderful hospitality. Hughie advises that a number of fish in the 2-3 lb range were caught in different locations.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Peter Hayes, a VFFA Member well known to all of us for his skills and achievements in the realm of fly-fishing at an international level. Peter has recently been elected to the Board of Governors of the International Federation of Fly Fishers. There are 30 Members of the Board and only four of these are located outside the United States of America. Well done Peter.



Bill Thomas who is a member of the VFFA has also recently received international acclaim. When not fly-fishing and deer hunting, Bill is Head of Environmental Studies at Bentleigh Secondary College, Melbourne. He is presently in London and I heard him interviewed on ABC Radio on November 22. The efforts of Bill and the students at Bentleigh Secondary College have just been rewarded by winning the International Green Award in the category for the Most Sustainable Educational Institution. The other finalists included York University Canada, Washington University USA and Abu Dhabi Indian School United Arab Emirates. The winner was announced in London on November 20. I have emailed my congratulations to Bill and his team and have invited him to be our Guest Speaker at our March General Meeting, on Thursday, March 21, 2013. Bill has tentatively agreed to this, and will confirm it with me when he returns to Australia in early December.

Bill will be taking off overseas again immediately after Easter next year to take up the Churchill Fellowship he won earlier this year in relation to his Environmental Sustainability efforts at Bentleigh Secondary College. Bill's address to the VFFA, hopefully next March, will be well worth hearing. Keep a watch on the Calendar of Events in the Newsletter to confirm the date and put it in your diary.

Whilst on important dates, remember that the VFFA Christmas Dinner is at the Celtic Club on Thursday, December 13. Commemorative Badges will be presented to 25 Year and 50 Year Members at the dinner. 50 Year Members will also be presented with a Certificate acknowledging their commitment to the VFFA. Guest speakers at the dinner will be Gerard Dridan (1948), David Featherstone (1962) and Lyndon Webb(1976). These gentlemen will relate some of their interesting experiences as members of the VFFA spanning the last 64 years.

There are still a couple of spots available for the Tasmania Trip in February next year. If you are interested, act quickly.

In conclusion, Subscription Statements have been sent to all members for 2013. If you have already paid, thank you; if you have not, now would be a good time to do so.

As the end of 2012 rapidly approaches, I wish all members of the VFFA a safe and Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year with much success in bringing numerous trout “to the net”.

Best wishes,

Terry Rogers (President)

The Annual Christmas Dinner

This year’s Christmas Dinner, on Thursday December 13, will be held at the Celtic Club, and we will be acknowledging and honouring our long-standing members. The records show that we have seven colleagues who have been members for 50 years or longer, and another 53 who have been members for 25 or more years. To acknowledge their years of membership the 25 year members will receive a special VFFA badge showing their 25 years, and the 50 year members will receive a similar badge along with a certificate to mark the occasion.

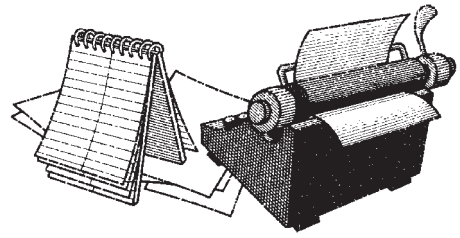


Our speakers for the Christmas Dinner will include Gerard Dridan, David Featherstone and Lyndon Webb, who will be invited to share tales of their fly-fishing exploits and any special memories of their years in the Association.

This year’s meal will be a traditional three course Christmas Dinner with an entree, a main course of roast turkey and ham, desert of plum pudding, all followed by tea and coffee.

The invitation and application form to attend the Christmas Dinner is included as an insert with this newsletter, but please be prompt.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



“Life is what happens to you while you’re busy making other plans”. That one comes from John Lennon, one of the Beatles. Normally in fly-fishing circles any reference to ‘beetles’ conjures up images of little terrestrials dropping out of trees, and good luck to them too – the trout love them and hence so do trout fishers. But we’ll allow John Lennon in just this once, as he has a point – particularly in relation to fishing trips. Half the fun of fishing trips, especially major ventures to distant places, is the preparation. Flies are tied, gear is sorted, maps are pulled out and scrutinised at great length, books and magazines and web sites are studied earnestly, and those in the know are phoned or bailed up at club meetings and interrogated at length ... all part of the fiesta. Anticipation rises as the departure day draws nigh, and the excitement is palpable. And then the big expedition is upon us, and sometimes our plans and hopes and expectations are even met. But how often does the weather or the conditions or the mysterious and unfathomable mind-set of the trout intervene, and things just don’t go quite as we’d hoped. Yet we remain eternal optimists, and so we should, as occasionally it all goes brilliantly - conditions are perfect and the fish wonderfully cooperative.

Is Howard Marshall being a little cynical in *Reflections on A River* when he says ‘Fishing consists of a series of misadventures interspersed by occasional moments of glory’? What about Joseph Monniger, in *Home Waters*, who tells us ‘I am almost certain most fishermen possess a peculiar bend to their makeup. Fishermen are optimists, and the fish in the future is always preferable to the fish at hand. Even the best fishermen catch fish only a small percentage of the time, which means we persevere in a sport that features failure as its main ingredient. Truly great days, when the fish hammer the fly as soon as it settles on the surface, are rare’. But we press on in the hope that our next cast might just catch us the fish of a lifetime.

Christmas and the associated holidays are fast approaching, and many of us will be heading off somewhere to wet a line. Best of luck to you and may it all go well. Safe travel, take care, plan carefully anyway, and enjoy your time on the water regardless. As the Irish say, ‘may the holes in your net be smaller than the fish you catch’.

Finally, Colin Morrison recently emailed me a note telling us that our good friend Peter Hayes was recently appointed as one of the International Federation of Fly Fishers’ governors. The IFFF is a North American-based international organisation that accredits casting instructors around the world. There are just 30 members on the Board of Governors, and these have included Joan Wulff, Lefty Kreh, and Steve Rajeff to name a few. Of the 30 there are only four outside of the USA, and one of these, the very latest appointment, is fellow VFFA member Peter Hayes. Heartiest congratulations from us all Peter, and well done!

Lyndon Webb.

An Elder Statesman – John Philbrick

Dermot O'Brien felt inspired to track down and talk with some of those who he describes as our 'Elder Statesmen' – members of the VFFA who have established over many years a reputation for being our master anglers – highly skilled and authoritative on all matters pertaining to trout. So in our September and October issues of this year we featured an extended interview with Bob Roles. This month we talk with John Philbrick, VFFA life member, past president, editor for 13 years, and one of the pioneers of wade polaroiding in the Tasmanian Highland lakes. Let's enjoy John's reflections and memories.

How did you get interested in fly-fishing?



The young Philbrick

In 1959 my parents bought a farm on the Plenty River at Greensborough, which at that time was still rural. I started bait fishing in the Plenty for Roach and Redfin. A school friend, Stephen Millard, was also interested in fishing. His father took the two of us camping in the Easter of 1962 on Mr Gilmour's farm adjacent to the bridge over the Goulburn that bears his name. We caught a few trout using worms and mussels. Around this time I used to occasionally travel by train to Melbourne on weekends and go to the public library where I would read fishing books. It was there that I read David Scholes' classic, *Fly Fisher in Tasmania*. His account of the wonderful trout fishing in Tasmania fired my youthful imagination. On one of these trips I wandered into Hartleys Sports Store in Flinders Street and saw the gleaming split cane fly rods, machined English fly reels and silk fly lines which were displayed there in glass cases. I remember being bemused by how the fly lines could be cast without sinkers.

It was Scholes' tales of the wonderful trout fishing in Tasmania and Hartleys impressive display of fly-fishing tackle that inspired me to become a fly-fisher. Stephen's father worked for an oil company and was able to get a trade order to buy two fly rods and fly lines at wholesale prices. Mr Millard purchased two J.M. Turville split cane rods, a "Victoria" and a "Geehi", and two Milwards terylene fly lines. Stephen had the first choice of rods and selected the Geehi, which was a three piece rod with a very soft action. Unbeknown to Stephen (and me) the Victoria was a vastly superior rod to the Geehi. He had first choice and opted for the Geehi. I definitely got the better end of that arrangement, albeit by default. I could not afford a fly reel and had to improvise by using my father's old Crouch reel.

In the summertime Saturdays were reserved for cricket. On Sundays I would walk several kilometres from our farm to Plenty Road Bundoora and hitch-hike to the King Parrot Creek above Flowerdale. I had no mentor – I just blundered along and learnt from my mistakes, which were many. It was difficult to cast with my outfit as the line was far too light to fully

load up the rod. When I did finally manage to get the fly into the right spot, which was not very often, the line would more often than not sink. It took a while, but eventually one day a thirteen inch trout took pity on me and rose to my floating Blue Dun. I was fifteen years old when I landed that trout.

The next big development was meeting Bob Roles who was working as a shop assistant at J.M. Turville's tackle shop in North Melbourne. He sold me an Air Cel plastic fly line and, with this line, my casting improved dramatically. During my visits to Turvilles Bob told me stories about the huge trout that were being taken at Lake Eucumbene, which, at that time, was filling and flooding new ground. These tales inspired Stephen and I to hitch-hike to Providence Portal at Lake Eucumbene in the May 1964 school holidays. As it was highly unlikely that we would have obtained permission to embark on this escapade, we told our respective parents that we were going to camp on the banks of the Werribee River and go fishing, which was at least partly true. Unfortunately Bob had neglected to tell us that it would be freezing cold at Lake Eucumbene in May. Despite having to endure Arctic like conditions with ice forming around the margins of the lake and running out of food we caught a few trout flogging Matukas at the river mouth and managed to get home safely. I have my doubts whether that trip would have met the requirements of the current VFFA Occupational Health and Safety Trips Policy but it was certainly an unforgettable adventure. It all developed from there – the Goulburn, Leake's Lagoon, Tasmania, the mayfly streams of the Monaro and then New Zealand.

Do you have a memorable moment as a young fly-fisher?

There have been many such moments. I vividly recall looking over Gilmour's Bridge for the first time in 1962 and marvelling at the crystal clear clarity of the water in the Goulburn River. The pity is that the current generation of fly-fishers have no inkling as to how clear the water in the Goulburn once was.

A memorable experience was working at the Kiandra Chalet in the 1964 and 1965 school holidays. The chalet was a wonderful, colourful place with larger than life characters wherever you looked. It was operated by an impish but kind-hearted fellow called Harvey Palfrey. When the Kosciusko State Park was created the residents of Kiandra were permitted to continue to live there. There was Bill Paterick, the former Kiandra postmaster, who in his younger days had been the Australian ski jumping champion. His son Max was a buckjumper of note. Jimmy Pattinson had been the Australian skiing champion following the end of the Second World War. He had a house down the road towards Adaminiby. I went fishing with him at Providence Portal one night after work. There were gold prospectors, stockmen from Adaminiby, Snowy Mountains Scheme workers from Cabramatta, passers-by, tourists, drunks, blow ins and, of course the fishermen. Some of the VFFA members I recall frequenting the bar were Arthur Adams, Bob Roles, Tony Johns, the late Brian Gordon and Graeme Leith. Wally and Tony took up residence in a less than salubrious, tumbledown old hut up the hill from the chalet which was derisively known as "Buckingham Palace". The peace at Kiandra and Cabramatta was kept by a snowy mountains legend, Sergeant "Lofty" Lomas of the New South Wales Police. He was a giant of a man and kept the peace very well – he was far too big to argue with. And, a few hundred yards below the Chalet flowed the Eucumbene River, which was one of Australia's great trout streams. This was pretty heady stuff for a schoolboy.



Peter Campbell presenting John with an award at a recent Annual Dinner

I also have an indelible memory of my first day fishing at Little Pine Lagoon. On November 30, 1968, I drove off the Princess of Tasmania with one of my University friends, Geoff Hadwen, in his old Morris Minor. Having studied my *Fly Fisher in Tasmania* very carefully, I decided to head straight for Little Pine Lagoon, as that is where I judged the best fishing would be. We drove up the Lake Highway from Deloraine and arrived at what we thought was Little Pine Lagoon. After putting the tent up I wandered off for a fish but was baffled by the small size of the lagoon and the total absence of any fishermen or any sign of trout.

The next morning we studied the map carefully and realised that we were camped on a small tarn above the Great Lake near Breona called Pine Lake. We decamped and drove on to the real Little Pine. Around midday I was fishing near the cricket pitch area when several very large trout suddenly started head and tail rising taking duns right in front of me - the trout in Little Pine in 1968 were much bigger than at the present time. This impressive spectacle demonstrated beyond all doubt that David Scholes was not exaggerating when he wrote *Fly Fisher in Tasmania*.

Where do you enjoy fishing most these days?

The Brumby's Creek Weirs have always fascinated me. It is a very challenging water. The clarity and shallowness of the water and the glass-like surface of the glides make the Brumby's trout very difficult. A cast over the back of a rising fish almost invariably results in an empty lie. The trick is to cast from a vantage point above the fish so as to avoid lining it and then try to ensure that the fly has a drag free drift. The theory is simple but putting it into practice is very difficult. In the past six or seven seasons I have fished at Brumby's from a Zodiac raft powered by an electric motor. Positioning the raft is an art in itself. I doubt that many of Peter Hayes' clients appreciate the high degree of skill that is involved in him positioning his drift boat so that they can have the chance to make a good presentation to a fish.

Brumby's trout are usually very hard earned and you cannot afford to waste your chances. Last October there was a smattering of duns hatching intermittently for several hours. I rose eight trout (an unheard of number for me) and missed every one of them on the strike. I didn't even feel any of them. I am still recovering from the sense of desolation that I felt at the end of that day.

The countless hours that I have spent at Brumby's has made me a better fisherman. In April 2010 the conditions there were very calm and the trout were cruising over shallow, glassy flats and very occasionally rising making pinprick rises. I found these fish to be almost impossible and had three consecutive blank days. Then I had a day floating down the lower

Macquarie River with David Hemmings in his drift boat and landed twenty trout on the dry, just like that. After the exacting, technical fishing at Brumby's these fish were relatively easy. My ego did not remain swelled for long as I fished Brumby's the next day and blanked again.

You may ask, why do I keep fishing at Brumby's when the rewards are so meagre. The answer is simple. Brumby's is one of Australia's classic fly waters and the enormous satisfaction that I get out of extracting one or two of the trout there is ample compensation for the fishless days.

What gear (rod, reel and line) do you use?

I use Sage rods and a beautiful little Peter McKean split cane rod. I have retired the Hardy Perfect reel that I fished with for decades and use Lamson and Loop large arbour reels spooled with Scientific Angler fly-lines. My leaders are either assembled to Charles Ritz's formula using Chameleon Maxima nylon or I use knotless leaders. When I use knotless leaders I cut off the last three feet of the leader and tie in a foot of six pound and a tippet of thirty inches of four pound breaking strain Chameleon Maxima nylon. I find that the nylon in manufactured leaders is soft and abrades and acquires memory easily whereas Maxima is tough, durable and much more suited to Australian conditions.

There is an amazing amount of fly-fishing tackle around these days. Does it detract from the real purpose?

The short answer is no. The reality is that there have been tremendous advances in fly-fishing tackle since I caught my first trout in 1963. The modern day graphite fly rod makes casting relatively easy. As Peter Hayes is apt to say, "There are no bad graphite rods made these days". The large arbour reels are also a great improvement on the old English style fly reels. The large arbour reduces fly line memory and facilitates extremely efficient line retrieval, which in turn improves line management. The internal drag system, if properly adjusted, eliminates overrunning and line jamming which was a major problem with my old Hardy Perfect reel. I used my first Lamson large arbour reel on the San River in Poland last year with a nine foot Sage Z-axis 4 weight rod and was very impressed. After using this outfit for a couple of weeks I changed over to a 5 weight rod and my old Hardy Perfect reel which was fitted with a 5 weight line. When I pulled some line out before making a cast the reel made a dreadful rasping sound as if it was broken. It was not broken - I had simply become used to the smooth and functional Lamson. I can't believe that I persisted with my Perfect as long as I did. The reality is that the old English style reels have become museum pieces. They may be aesthetically pleasing to a collector but their functional performance is quite inferior to the modern day large arbour reels.

When I used my first Air Cel fly-line I couldn't believe how easy it was to cast with it. The modern day fly-lines are better again and much more durable - the Air Cel line did not last long as it would develop cracks as the season progressed. Goretex waders are another improvement. We used to wear Horne's waders which became extremely hot in warm weather. I can remember my trousers being soaked in sweat when I fished the Goulburn River on a warm summer's day. Wading boots did not exist when I started fly-fishing. They give a lot of support on stony bottoms and are ideal for wet wading. Snakes aside, wet wading is much more comfortable and pleasant than wearing waders during our Australian summer.

There are so many other improvements. For example, amber polaroids give an edge on days when the sunshine is dulled by cirrus clouds, retractors with purpose built clippers are

superior to the unwieldy nail cutters we used to carry in our pockets until we lost them, and the Dave Whitlock leader connection kits that Peter Hayes sells ensure a seamless connection between the fly line and the leader.

Philbrick's Nymph is well known. How did it come about?

In the 1970's and 1980's I used to camp at Penstock Lagoon for about a month each summer. Polaroiding had not taken off there at that time. The Tasmanians would fish from dawn until the wind got up, which was usually at about nine or ten o'clock in the morning. That suited me because that was about the time that I started fishing. I would often have the whole of the western shore to polaroid by myself. The large browns in Penstock used to cruise in the shallows feeding on stick caddis. I blended brown, yellow, olive, green, black and red seal's fur into very natural hue and used it to tie a conventional nymph. After a fish or two had chewed the fly and it became very thin and bedraggled, I noticed that it appeared to work better. So I started tying the fly very sparsely. I gave some of these nymphs to Jim Allen and he had success with them fishing for the Great Lake stick caddis feeders and in the Western Lakes. One day Jim met a fisherman called John O'Keefe using my nymph. Jim was curious as to where he got the fly from. John told him that he had found it embedded in the mouth of a trout he had caught in the western lakes. He tied copies of it and found that it was a very effective pattern. Anyway, the first intimation I had that my fly was known as Philbrick's Nymph was when Rob Sloane rang me one day and told me that Jim had listed "Philbrick's Nymph" as one of his favourite patterns in a book which was about to be published called *Australia's Best Trout Flies*.

The reality is that this is not some sort of special trout killing pattern. It is a fly that often works well if it is presented properly to trout cruising in the shallow margins of Tasmania's highland lakes. The skill is in the presentation of the fly and discerning that the trout has taken it. I'm sure that plenty of other "deceiver" patterns would work equally well in the hands of a skillful fly-fisher. My nymph does have four attributes – it is a natural buggy looking colour and because it is sparsely tied it does not make a big splash when it hits the water. It always sinks but does so slowly, which is very important in shallow water. But, in a sense, it is more about the technique than the fly. For me the technique developed from what I had learned when polaroiding the wary brown trout of Leake's Lagoon on the Goulburn River.

Have you created other flies that are less well known?

In short, I have not. There are very few original flies created by modern day tiers although there are plenty who will readily claim that they have done so. The reality is that nearly all of these "creations" are variations of existing patterns. Indeed, my nymph is merely a variation of traditional nymphal patterns.

I do introduce my own very minor variations to classic patterns. For example, I don't rib the palmered hackle on my Macquarie Reds with fine gold wire. Instead I use the hot orange tying silk for the rib which I find doesn't squash the hackle down as the gold wire tends to do, and it makes for a slightly lighter, more buoyant fly. And I substitute a Grizzly cock feather for the Cree cock feather when tying the throat hackle for the simple reason that good Cree hackles are hard to procure and I don't think that the fly suffers as a result.

What are your favourite flies?

My favourite flies reflect the places I mainly fish - the North Esk and South Esk Rivers, Macquarie River, Brumby's Creek Weirs, Four Springs Lake and Penstock Lagoon. I intend to add Lake Leake to that list. Peck's Duns, Possum Emergers and Barry Lodge's Emergers are all I need for dun feeders, whilst Macquarie Reds, Hackle Black Spinners and Red Quills are my preferred patterns for trout feeding on spinners. When they are fixated on jumping and taking flying spinners it is difficult to buy a rise whatever fly you have on the end. I have had reasonable success using a Tup's Indispensable on baetid feeders.

When trout are rising occasionally in the deeper waters of a lake but mainly feeding on mayfly nymphs, a slowly retrieved weighted mayfly nymph can work. When they are moving closer to the shallow margins I change to unweighted flies such as Green Damsel Fly Nymphs and Pot Scrubber Nymphs. I have not polaroided the western lakes much in recent years due to mobility problems. But I did have a day there last January and when my nymph was presented correctly the trout took it readily. On smaller streams I use a Red Tag a lot of the time. It is also a very good fly to use on bigger rivers and lakes, particularly on warm, sunny, breezy days. My Red Tag has also accounted for trout in the Test River at Whitchurch Fulling Mill, trout and grayling in the San River in Poland and it has also worked well for me in New Zealand, particularly on willow grub feeders. I tie nearly all of the flies that I use and take care to use quality materials and to get the proportions right. I use flies tied by Noel Jetson, Barry Lodge and Geoff Wing as models for many of the flies that I tie. I am confident fishing with my own flies, which is important.

What is the greatest influence or development in your fly-fishing career?

Meeting Bob Roles in 1964 when he was working for J.M. Turville in North Melbourne. Bob had a profound influence on many fly-fishers in the 1960's including myself. He was and is a perfectionist and managed to persuade his customers to purchase good quality tackle instead of the hotchpotch they would most probably bought had they gone elsewhere. He fitted them out with "Victoria" split cane rods, state of the art Air Cel fly-lines and leaders tied to Charles Ritz's formula with Water Queen nylon. They read Scholes' *Fly Fisher in Tasmania* and *The Way of an Angler*, wore Horne's waders, fished with Pot Scrubber Nymphs and Hackle Black Spinners tied by Dick Wigram, dried their dry flies with Amadou, netted their trout with Streamcraft nets and weighed them with brass Salter spring balances before cleaning them with Mercator knives, all sold to them by Bob. He fished extensively and was generous in sharing his knowledge with his customers. He had them polaroiding the Goulburn backwaters looking for cruising trout to cast wet Black Beetles at, fishing the Eucumbene and Murrumbidgee Rivers with Nobby Hoppers and large Geehi Beetles, trying to trick the Chironomid feeders at Eildon Weir and Tullaroop Reservoir with Bill Ricketts' chironomid patterns, fishing in Lake Eucumbene after dark using big Alexandras tied on low water salmon hooks and presenting a Twilight Beauty to the dun feeders at Moorooloolooloo Reservoir. It is important to remember that at that time there were only two fly fishing clubs in Melbourne (the Red Tag and the VFFA), little in the way of contemporary Australian fly fishing literature and magazines and no fishing guides. Bob filled a huge information void and was a mentor and advisor to legions of fly-fishers. If anyone doubts the influence that he exerted in the fly fishing world, it was Bob who was responsible for converting Jim Allen - arguably the most influential Australian fly-fisher of our time - from casting a spinner to fly-fishing. This story of Jim's conversion was recently told in an article in FlyLife magazine.

What advice would you give to inexperienced fly-fishers?

Use good flies, look after your leader, think for yourself, relax and enjoy yourself when you are out trouting and don't let other anglers influence your perception of whether you have had a good day.

What advice would you give to experienced fly-fishers?

None, as if they are experienced they will be far too set in their ways.

Alive or dead: who would you like to spend a day on the water with?

I would like to go fifty years back in time and spend a night sea trout fishing with Hugh Falkus on the Esk River. Falkus was a very colourful character. He was a fighter pilot for a short time during the Second World War until his plane was shot down over France and he was taken prisoner by the Germans. After the war for a time he made wildlife films and was involved in a boating tragedy when making a film about basking sharks. His boat was hit by a freak wave and capsized. Falkus swam to shore to get help but all of the other occupants of the boat died including his first wife. He later remarried and settled down with his new wife at Cragg Cottage in Cumbria, which just happened to have a frontage onto the Esk River. This was one of Britain's finest sea trout streams at that time. The lessons that he learned there led to him writing *Sea Trout Fishing*. This has become an angling classic and has been reprinted and republished on numerous occasions. His memoir volumes *Some Of It Was Fun* and *The Stolen Years* are, in my opinion, masterpieces in angling literature. Falkus was a deeply flawed genius who was given to irascibility and bouts of heavy drinking. So I would definitely feel at home with him. One of the Falkus stories that I particularly like relates to the period towards the end of his life when he was dying of cancer. He had two circles of friends - the outer circle who he regarded as being sycophants and the inner circle who were his real friends. Towards the end of his illness Falkus made it known to the former group that he would be grateful to receive gifts of bottles of French Champagne and barrels of fresh oysters at his cottage. When these arrived in copious quantities he invited the latter group around to eat and drink them.

You are just back from a saltwater fly-fishing trip; can you give us an insight?

I love my saltwater fly-fishing. It provides a great opportunity to escape from Melbourne's winter and visit beautiful places with warm climates. I have just penned an article for the newsletter on a recent trip to Aitutaki in the Cook Island. But much as I love saltwater fly-fishing, come Spring my thoughts turn to my first love – fly-fishing for trout.

If you were starting out again, where would you go and what would you do differently?

This may sound corny but I would follow the same path - a few years bait fishing in the Plenty and Goulburn Rivers, cutting my teeth as a fly-fisher on the King Parrot Creek before moving on to the more varied and technical fishing on the Goulburn and Leake's Lagoon, then Tasmania and New Zealand. It has been a wonderful journey and I don't think that I have missed out on anything. And I think that it was a big advantage to be self-taught as I have learned to think for myself and enjoy my successes.



John fishing the famous San River in Poland

However, there is one thing I would have done differently. I would definitely have bought an Air Cel line instead of the wretched Milward's terylene line that I struggled with in my first twelve months or so of fly-fishing. I still have dark thoughts about that line. I don't think that it ever properly loaded up my rod and no matter how much Cerolene I applied to the line, it would sink as soon as a trout started rising.



Nancy Tichborne watercolours

“The Creeks of Hereabouts”

(by Bert Thompson. This fascinating account of the trout fishing in the Traralgon district in the 1920s and 1930s was provided by Brian Eddy. Bert Thompson was the Editor and possibly proprietor of the local paper, the *Traralgon Journal*. He was also a very keen fly-fisher. In the late 1970s, when quite elderly, he gave a talk to the Latrobe Valley Fly-Fishers Club, and the following article is the text of this talk. He gave his notes to Brian Eddy who transcribed them but didn't quite complete the task until quite recently. Thank you Brian for this enchanting contribution to our understanding of our Victorian fly-fishing history.)

Well now fellows, it's a pleasure to talk to a few mighty Izaaks who, like myself, love the rod, line and feathered hook. And for almost sixty years it's been my privilege to angle in Gippsland streams, and more particularly those of the Traralgon locality. In fact there was a time when I could almost claim to know every stone in the bed of Traralgon Creek. And in those times I travelled by the good old push bike to make their acquaintance.

It was on the 30th of August 1924 when I arrived in Traralgon, and before the day was out I was introduced to the pretty little stream meandering through its centre by my great mate-to-be, the late Terry Causer. With the imaginative gift such as anglers like your good selves possess, he fed me stories of mighty trout lurking in every hole and in every ripple, waiting for the cast of your lure. From that moment on I was a young bloke well and truly hooked on trout angling, and for the next fifty years Terry and I frequently angled in company, looking for the big one he told me about on the day of my arrival in Traralgon. And only twice since have I found him. One I grassed; the other joined that famous legion of “the one that got away!”

You'll all agree I know, or you wouldn't be here tonight, that angling is a sport difficult to excel in, and also a sport of relaxation and a balm for all your troubles. But I am rambling in fantasy, as so often is the way of the rodman; but one should not do this for overlong, for as you know, that is the moment that you get the rise and you miss him.

I guess what you are no doubt particularly interested in is a backward glimpse at our streams as they once were, and the kind of angling they gave in the years that have long since passed. So I shall talk particularly of Traralgon Creek and the conditions as they existed. The story is fairly typical of the other streams about there - streams such as Flynn's Creek, Middle Creek, Merriman's Creek, the Morwell River and its East Branch, and many another of the smaller waterways. In the main they all gave good to excellent angling. Today, sadly they are mostly but travesties of their former selves, at least from a rodman's assessment. They neither give up quality nor quantity as they once did.

So now you ask, “But what did the creeks and the rivers really look like then?” Good question. As I've said we'll look at Traralgon Creek for more reasons than one, for it was there one Easter Friday morning in the darkness of the false dawn that I hooked my fishing mate Alfie through the gristle of his snout, and there, for the next six hours rested my Royal Coachman while we angled throughout the morning hours. It all happened because I'd put my rod and line together the night before, disjointed it and stowed it in the back of the ute. In the struggle of putting it back together again in the dark, somehow Alf's nose got in the way of the hook, and I had the first one for that day!

“What are following me about for?” I ask Alfie, as each time I endeavoured to get some space to assemble my gear he was right there with me. “You’ve got me hooked,” he snarled. “Bulldust” I said. “Too bloody right you have,” he moaned. “Bulldust,” I repeated, “but let’s have a look. By George,” I added in surprise, “I have got you hooked, and the barb is protruding from the gristle dividing your nostrils. Hold on,” I add sympathetically, “and I’ll cut it out”, suiting these words to the opening of my pocket-knife and reaching for the fly tethered beneath his nose.

“Go to blazes,” he shouted, “you blasted well won’t.” And there the Royal Coachman rode until dinner-time. Alfie spent most of the time hiding behind trees that morning for the trout were well on the rise and kept leaping for his snout with the dainty morsel dangling from its end.

By this time we’d had enough but before going home we went up to see our friend, Kelvin Smith. Smithy took one look at Alfie, roared laughing, and made a dash for his pliers. One snip! A flick of the wrist, and the fly floated off and Alfie rejoined we liberated males again.

But I digress; I must tell you what Traralgon Creek did look like. To do this I’ll take you down through Campbell’s Park Estate, the scene of Traralgon’s first white settlement, to the La Trobe River junction, two miles north of the town to begin the journey upstream from there to its headwaters some twenty-five miles or so to the south. As we follow its twists and bends we note it is quite a noble little creek, as yet not willow infested, but still with considerable native timbers along its banks; some dead, but much of it still green and growing. The holes are deep; there are logs and fallen branches here and there where trout may lurk, and the water is clear for it is summer as we stroll the banks.

On this day, sixty years ago as we approach the town, then residence to about 2,300 people, we see the willows have taken over most of this fine waterway, yet there are frequent good holes to be found. Like the one in Miller’s garden, in the bend just above the Stock bridge at the end of Franklin Street. Many a fine sand trout came out of that hole in Miller’s garden, and on occasion a brown trout fought the angler there. And there was also the hole a little downstream by the Chinaman’s garden where Dr Johnson, our revered chimney sweep of the time, had landed the five pounder.

But we must continue on up past the Loco Sheds, where the railwaymen kept the iron horse galloping up and down the Gippsland line, with Traralgon a most important junction town. However, we mustn’t loiter here for the usual pie and coffee, nor tarry to imbibe, for we are on our way up the creek. For the next five miles, as we head for the first road crossing at Cribbin’s bridge and following the sweeping bends, we pass by Walker’s, Dunbar’s, Trewin’s and Powell’s. There are still many willows, but also a lot of good holes where a line may be cast without being caught on a weeping trailer or maybe in a limb of a native tree.

Ah, yes; Cribbin’s bridge. It brings back memories, so let’s sit on the grassy banks a moment and roll a cigarette while I tell you a story or two. It was at Trewin’s - a mile downstream, that in the dusk of an autumn evening Ted Barbor and I cleared a five-foot six, seven strand barbed-wire fence from a standing jump when Ferdinand, the bull and herd gentleman, bore down upon us at a gallop and with some dreadful roaring. We didn’t leave overmuch of our pants on the top wire either.

And there were trout there too - good trout. I recall how, on one Sabbath morning, I went with another of my famous cronies, the late Bertie Coates, to Cribbin’s Bridge to wet the line. Here we angled in the dewy sunrise. I’ll not tell you what I caught, but Bertie, master of the angle that

he was, in three hours had nine fine trout in the sugar bag. There would have been nothing under a pound and some up to a pound and a half. Among his catch were fish bearing the beak marks of cormorants which had not been equal to the job of holding and swallowing them. You see the stream then carried enough trout to make it sufficiently interesting for these black raiders to flap their way up from the Gippsland Lakes to partake of our lovely fat trout of thirty, forty, fifty, sixty and more years ago.

So on we go, Dave Gilmour's on the west bank and Miles' and Johnson's on the east. Here the waters are very fishable for about three quarters of a mile, shaded here and there by a few native trees, and then the willows intrude for a distance. But they give way to native timbers as we pass by Christy Stammer's and McCormack's, until we are at the lane serving Dick Drane, whose farm is on the west side. There are lots of good holes along here but there's also long stretches difficult to angle, for the scrub is thick and the creek narrow. As we come to Ted Pentland's and follow the wide sweeping bend leading to Downie's Bridge, the willows grow thick again for a distance and the rodman must dab in here and there if he would fish, for it is impossible to make either back or forward cast. And now we ramble along the wide sweep around Ted's property to angle some very good holes where the trees permit, and soon are at Downie's Lane crossing.

Its not far now before we'll come to where Stony Creek will join our fine stream. There's some jolly good ponds as we approach this joining of the streams at Jim Thompson's, and where, when I came here in 1924 there was a trout hatchery staffed by Tom Fisher. A very apt name for an ichthyologist. Tom was assisted in his job during the spawning season by the Thompson clan, who farmed on the flats hard beside the nets. Many big spawning trout from the early winter lake run were taken there. Some weighed as much as ten pounds and perhaps more. They were stripped by Tom and the ova sent off to stock other streams throughout the State.

Let me take you to another district hatchery. This one's on the Tyers river at Bert Christensen's, where the river enters the hills, and its there Bert milked the big lake run trout which preferred the river to the creek. The Traralgon Fish and Game Society was interested in both of these projects and gave practical support, as the Fisheries and Wild Life Department was then in its infancy.

This Department was managed by Freddie Lewis, who basked in the fine title of Chief Inspector. He did a great job on a budget of \$8,000 annually, and his total staff was the Tom Fisher already mentioned. He relied on lots of voluntary assistance, and so we anglers had to do much for ourselves, and this, I think, was certainly for the betterment of the sport. It's said: "God helps those who help themselves", and as I now look on the way our streams have degenerated since this practical interest of clubs and their members has been by-passed by a modernised department, I've concluded there is much truth in that axiom. The Traralgon Club for many years assisted in the stocking projects of our streams. This we did with labour, time, money, policing, and interest - and we reaped the benefits.

We are now about to leave behind the creek with its muddy bottom, for waters rippling on gravel beds. By no means do I denigrate those downstream waters, for out of them came many a good two-pounder, and frequently! But now we enter upon a stream more to the fancy of the fly-fisherman, for it's only here and there we'll be harried by willows, while numerous big gums along the banks will shed their bugs and encourage the trout to rise. The foothills loom ahead, there's Lade's on the left and Bill Ikin's on the west as we take the bend into the Strzeleckis and angle along the waters dividing Beaton's flat.

Now we have continuous room to work the fly with ease. And the trout rise readily, and still more readily the higher up we go. We take the sharp bend leading to Jack Thompson's bridge, where the Jeeralang creek links with Traralgon Creek. Now the creek is gravel-bedded all the way, the holes productive, and the ripples often prolific.

I recall how one morning at the big hole at this junction of the two creeks, I took three trout in three casts from its dark, swirling waters. You'll think I have something of an obsession with willows. You'll be right, I do have. While I admire their beauty I foresee the day when, unless controlled, they'll entirely take over many of our waterways to the exclusion of the gentle angler; and here today, at that spot, you'll see the hole has gone and the willow reigns in its place.

So it's now around several bends and ponds, a hundred metres in length, until we pass by Guntzler's garden and with the Koornalla Park not far out in front. We are now in a stretch of fine water, with deepish holes, ripples and runs. And so it is as we pass by Guntzler's Bridge, Koornalla Park Bridge, and the bridge just above "The Face on the Tree", taking our trout with a pleasant continuity of success. If an angler couldn't land one or two out of each of the holes at the back of the reserve he was having a bad day.

Some of the bridges mentioned were still to be built in my earliest days of wading the creek, and Contractor Ekberg who was constructing the road had reached a mile short of Howell's Creek, 15 miles from the town of our abode. But we're not talking of roads - you don't hook many trout there.

It is interesting to take look at "The Face on the Tree" as we pass by. There it is, a huge face, adorned with fierce handlebar moustache, burnt into the butt of a once mighty mountain ash clipped off about twenty feet from the ground. Probably the fire brand etcher was one of Ekberg's road gangers filling in an idle moment. Whatever, for a long time this tree and its face was to be a noted land mark. Anglers would say, "I started at the Face on the Tree" or "I hooked a pound and a halfer in the big corner hole below The Face on the Tree", and so on, constantly using the Tree as the marker.

It was the devastating fires of 1936 that destroyed the Face on the Tree, and the bridge. Again I remember the hole immediately above the bridge and 300 yards on past The Face, because in three casts I once landed three good trout and missed the fourth.

On and on, around Suicide Bend - that big bend that comes back almost on to itself and where, in the 1920s, 'Ginger' Tom Downie was farming at times. What a bend! We, that is, the Traralgon Fish and Game Society, built a low weir wall in it around the end of the twenties with the purpose of making a good hole still better. It did for a while, but eventually the idea defeated itself, as the big hole silted up with gravel carried down in the floods. Now it is no more than a mediocre pool compared with its once excellence.

It was in this lovely pond one morning, more years ago than I care to remember, I hooked the trout I consider in some ways to be the best of my many angling days. Although only 14 inches in length, it weighed in at one and a quarter pounds cleaned and gilled, and was built like a Trevally - very slim at the rudder end and with mighty tail fin. As this fellow felt the barb he took off pulling like an elephant and racing like a cheetah, reeling off twenty yards of line before I could turn him. The dash upstream was no less vicious, and to gather in the slack was impossible. After fifteen minutes I wore him down and into the sugar bag he went. Our creel in those days, and the standard equipment of all, was the ubiquitous sugar bag.

Suicide Bend was a gem of the stream in the twenties and thirties, with deep holes, deep narrow runs, splendid ripples and ponds hooded by giant piles of logs, and all bottomed with stones and boulders. What it is now I need not tell you. Time, man, flood and fire, have all had their way. There are now no more than five or six holes and these mostly of minor significance throughout the whole its length of almost a mile. Sad to say, the last time I passed along this bend - and that was not so long ago - I did not see one trout dash for cover from its shallows. That's not a good sign.

Still Southward Ho, we travel along the lengthy strait where the huge boulders still stand sentinel at its beginning. Unlike most other big boulders that once were in the creek at various places, these have not as yet been pounded to gravel by the floods of more recent years which, for some reason, seem to have had a more devastating effect on the stream surrounds than all those of the ages gone before. Huge rocks have been battered to pebbles, and many a good pondage filled in with shifting gravel, or made alarmingly shallow.

Here, as expected, was good water and good fish in quantity, just as there were in the Peach Tree Bend immediately above. The Peach Tree Bend took its name from the two lone peach trees growing on its banks at its farthest twist. It was one fine Sunday morning here that Bert Doble and I went down to see if the peaches, which seemed to belong to no one, were ripe. We'd been black fishing all night and left our Buggy and Horse driver - the inimitable Blackfish King Charlie Sartori - sitting as was his want in the driver's seat holding the reins. The peaches were as hard as the rocks in the creek, and by the time we return up the sharp bank, we could see Charlie was having a little snooze. "Ah," says me mate Doble, and with that flung one of the two peaches he carried in the direction of our sleeping coachman. Little did we expect the missile to carry true, but it did as we stood open-mouthed watching its flight. Whack! The stone-hard peach struck with a tremendous thump on Charlie's cranium following its forty yard flight. Dead silence reigned for the next five minutes, and as we sheepishly climbed aboard. By this time the Blackfish King had revived and what he didn't say doesn't matter. He grossly labelled our parents, and left us in no doubt as to our status in society. We had to listen to the tirade for the full fifteen miles it took us to reach Traralgon and home. We made no retort, for we believed silence might turn away wrath. Anyway, we'd be out with him again come next weekend, but he didn't ever invite us to go down again and see if the peaches were ripe.

On to the stream again. Another short strait, a bend, and a very rocky narrow channel with galloping, foaming waters out in front. This leads us to a mighty long hole and yet another straight run which will land us at the Howell's Creek junction. I tell you, in fishing those waters then two hundred metres would provide more angling than a kilometre or more nowadays, and probably six times as many rises when the trout were on.

I should mention that Howell's Creek, although but a very small stream, was a good spawning ground. I have memories of going up this waterway in the 1967-68 drought year with the redoubtable Alfie. The bed was dry, except for here and there where there were small ponds evidently fed from underground. And in each of these ponds there were perhaps five or six hundred small trout from say four to six inches long, waiting the opportunity to enter the main stream when the rains came - that is if they survived that dreadful period. That was the first time I'd seen Traralgon Creek reduced to a series of holes.

From Howell's Creek onward to Hogg's Bridge some three or four miles upstream the story of Traralgon Creek is similar, but with this difference - we now enter the territory of piled logs:

piles as big as a house room, sometimes two rooms and perhaps even bigger. These harbours gave shelter to cunning trout, but more particularly to tribes of blackfish.

These great stacks of timber were often in primordial nooks upon which the sun never shone, as it was blotted out by the tall forest trees. They were continually wetted by the 'pride of the morning' - a light shower, or Scotch mist, which was the daybreak pattern in the hills in those days. Frequently I took a grand cropper as I clambered over these big barriers, to rise and crash again on their slippery surface.

And on many an evening as the sun went down I chose my favourite spot on one of these piles to drop the sinker and baited hook to the hungry yellow bellies I knew were waiting below. One night, in my absence, one of my grand old mates of the streams, Ted Klemke, pulled three yellow bellies from beneath a pile I'd often fished for nothing nearly so big. They scaled in at 31b 10oz, 31b 4oz and 21b 8oz. And he had the hide to tell me he'd lost the daddy of them all! Tell me now, why hadn't some of these beauties fallen to my wattle grubs or bunch of worms.

By the way, it was in the same hole that I hooked a trout, 15 inches long, that substantiated the popular belief that trout are cannibals. This trout had a six inch blackfish whole in its stomach, digested only so much as to have the outer black skin reduced to a creamy white. On another occasion I did see in Middle Creek a mighty trout about to swallow one of its own kind. This fish I estimate to have been between five and six pounds in weight, and was holding crosswise in its jaws a trout of some eleven inches. He was in the process of killing it before end-for-ending it and sliding it down the hatch! No wonder he ignored my tiny grasshopper as substitute for that of his juicy young relative.

Back to the creek, with the waters rippling over its stony bed or flowing silently and deep under an overhanging bank clothed in rushes, or lapping a half-buried log that looked almost as old as time. So at length we pass through the locality of the park now called Le Roy - a park that wasn't in my first memories of the creek, but rather a heavily-wooded bend in which you'd get lost a half dozen times as you endeavoured to make your way to the stream from the track (misnamed a road) and by which we'd camp. In the lantern's feeble light every tree, every dogwood, every jack rope, and every blackwood looked alike. You'd scarcely believe the difficulty of finding your way to the creek over those two hundred or less yards but there was no great hazard, for one was penned within the sweep of the bend.

Within another short mile we're at Hogg's Bridge, where the Traralgon Creek divides into the right and left hand branches. Need I take you further? No I think not. I leave these sparkling tributaries to your imagination. They held many smaller trout, flowed pure and sweet in summer and rollicked to the rains of spring. They had deep holes and fast runs, and were splendid feeders to the main stream. And yet good trout lurked there too, as my old friend Dicky Brown once told me how at the divide at Hogg's Bridge he'd hooked the really big one. "Yes," said Dickie, "he was so big that when I struck him he snapped the line in three places."

There was not a great number of fly-fishermen in those earlier days, and even today they do not predominate. Way back then most anglers preferred worms in the early part of the season, which opened on 1st of September, and as the spring advanced they turned to mudeyes and then with summer to grasshoppers and crickets. Grasshopper fishing is akin to the art of fly-fishing. For me, at least, it was.

The popular artificial lure of earlier years was the Devon spinner. Fortunately it was not as

deadly as the present Celta, although it probably rose as many or more trout, possibly because our streams were well stocked. But mostly the fish simply bumped the lure and failed to get hooked, which in hindsight was good for its possible we would have even then denuded our excellent streams.

Now you're entitled to say I'm talking sour grapes when I say I'm of the opinion the time is here when spinners of any kind should be barred from the smaller streams. You are entitled to do so, for once I was a spinner enthusiast and spun such waters frequently. I could rise as many as fifty and sixty, and sometimes more in a morning, but rarely did I land more than three or four.

Think of the catastrophe there would have been if we spinner men had pulled them out wholesale as is often done now with the more deadly spinners of today. The spinner in contrast to the fly is a fish killer, for it's difficult to release a small trout without mauling it badly and killing it. On the other hand a small fly-hooked fish is easily unhooked and lives to fight another day.

I feel that with the deterioration of our creeks, the silting up and loss of good holes, poor stocking and heavier angling pressure because motor vehicles have made it so easy to be on the stream that small waters can't meet the demands of the spinner. That, of course, is a matter of opinion and of argument.

Here I must stop. There's a long, long story which could be told, but as I conclude, let me say, "Blessed is the fly angler ... he at least thinks he's the salt of the earth."

VFFA 2013 Trip to Tasmania

VFFA members participating in this fabulous annual event will again be staying at Peter Hayes' fly-fishing lodge at Cressy. The trip runs from Saturday, February 16, to Friday, February 22, 2013. Those attending need to make their own travel arrangements, and the cost is \$650, which covers twin shared accommodation, linen including towel and face washer, bed, breakfast, dinner, and evening drinks including beer and wine. Waters fished include the North and Midlands streams and the Central Plateau lakes. Guides are also available for a cost of \$450 each per person per day with two anglers sharing a guide. A current Tasmania license is required, and these can be purchased online from www.ifs.tas.gov.au

Hamish Hughes is convening this trip, and those keen to participate need to read the NOE (Official VFFA 'Notice of Event') which was included with the October newsletter, and then complete and post an 'Event Registration Form' to Hamish at 22a Moorhouse Street, Armadale, Victoria 3143. Hamish can be contacted on



mobile 0418 108 686, or email hthughes@bigpond.net.au.

This event is limited to 16 participants, and there are just one or two places left, so aspirants need to post their registration forms in quickly to ensure a spot.

The Warrnambool Report

There is no doubt that this year's VFFA season opener at Warrnambool on the second weekend of November was a huge success. The fishing was good - well at least passable, with some of us city members catching some sizeable trout, and others at least connecting with a few of the denizens of those great Warrnambool rivers. But the real feature of the weekend was the fabulous camaraderie between the 12 city members who made the trip and the local Warrnambool members who acted as our ghillies and guides and made every effort to look after us and find us some fish. Again, as in previous years, the Saturday night barbecue at Jim Blakeslee's property on the upper Merri was superb - a truly fabulous meal in a delightful setting.

A handfull of members formed an advance party and headed to Warrnambool a day or two earlier to make use of Jim's celebrated guiding skills on the Friday. Unfortunately the weather was rather cold and bleak, with odd showers at various times, so the bugs and insects weren't out and about. But Jim still managed to find some fish for them. David Wakefield made the observation that Jim's dog Bruny is almost as good a guide as Jim. Bruny invariably accompanies Jim when he's out fishing so Bruny knows all the good spots. When he's on the upper Merri he trots along the banks and stops at every place where Jim has caught a fish or two.

Saturday dawned pleasant and promised better conditions, and the aspirants (city slickers) gathered at Jim's place at 9 am, to be taken out by our local guides. The day proved to be mostly sunny with the lightest of breezes, and there were fish out and about, though not as many as we would have liked. Arthur Adams caught a nice brown in the upper Merri and Gordon Baker and Bruce Houghton both snared browns (3 lb and 2 lb) in the Mount Emu. Others also caught fish, and there were some who connected and then suffered the long distance release.



Hughie Maltby checking the steaks



Peter, Lester and Choco enjoyed the night



Entrees, including some superb smoked trout

Regardless, the smoked trout and entrees and steaks and chicken and salads and cheesecakes that were served up at the evening barbecue were ample compensation for any disappointment with the fishing. Some 25 anglers and their partners enjoyed the meal immensely, along with the sheer pleasure of a very pleasant evening in beautiful surroundings in good company.

Well done Warrnambool, and sincere thanks again to Jim and Tricia Blakeslee, and Adrian Jacobs and his team of very willing and helpful guides. Our thanks, too, to Hugh Maltby, for his time and organisational skills in organising such a great weekend.



And the main course was delectable



Bruce Houghton's brown from the Mt Emu



Adrian Jacobs – president of the Warrnambool Fly-fishers and one of our friendly guides

This Month's Yarn

(from August 1961)

“You hear a lot about clever dogs”, said Uncle George, reflectively helping himself to yet another glass of Marty’s sherry. “You know, dogs like that fly-fishing friend of yours – McBraggart I think he’s called – claims to have owned. But I tell you that some of our native animals, if you know how to treat them, can show even more intelligence.”

“When I was young I spent some time prospecting in some of the tributaries of the Upper Mitta Mitta. I had a camp on the Bullroarer Creek and while I was there I became quite friendly with a young female grey kangaroo. I had rescued her one afternoon from a pack of savage dingoes, and she was most appreciative. She used to follow me everywhere, watching what I did, and more than once when I was panning for gold in some bend of the creek, she scraped off some gravel with a hind leg and revealed a number of excellent nuggets for me”.

“There were plenty of trout in those mountains streams in those days – far more than now of course – and I often fished for them. Sylvie (that’s the name I christened my young kangaroo pal) soon learned to sit quietly behind me, and showed great interest and even some enthusiasm in my angling activities. To show how clever she was, one afternoon I went out and fished a pool upstream from my camp where I knew there was a good fish, and Sylvie came and stood a few yards behind me. Well, on my first cast I hooked the big fella - a rainbow as it turned out, and much larger than I thought. It wasn’t long before he made for the fast water at the bottom of the pool where it flowed out into a rough and bouldery cascade. I was in real trouble. I didn’t have a landing net – I’d broken mine whacking a large tiger snake on the way up. Nearer and nearer that rainbow fought its way towards the cascade.”

“All is lost!” I thought, and then suddenly there was a tremendous splashing in front of me and I was blinded with a huge spray of water. I staggered back in shock onto the shingle bank behind me. When I could see properly again I found that Sylvie was on the shingle bank with me - and so was the fish! This clever kangaroo had hopped into the water and scooped up the trout using her pouch as a landing net.”

“Have another glass of sherry Uncle”, was all we said.

Fly-Fish Mt Baw Baw Weekend

(by Rick Dugina)

I have just arrived home after a 3 hour drive from this exciting event which was put together by DPI and the Mt Baw Baw staff. We who attended were looked after in magnificent fashion with great accommodation and fabulous food. The fishing was quite a surprise to me, not having fished this area before, and it proved to be challenging but rewarding to many of the fly-fishers who attended. Unfortunately I managed to turn my treasured 2 piece cane rod into a 3 piece, but that's a story for another day as the memory is still a bit raw and painful.

DPI staff ran a short workshop prior to the main Saturday evening dinner which centred around the promotion of fly-fishing and guests were asked to write their opinions on how best to promote our sport. Many good suggestions were put forward and noted for upcoming research.

Guests included Bill Sykes, Federal Member for that area, and Anthony Hurst and Travis Dowling from DPI (very well known to VFFA members). The weekend was very well organised and managed by Julia Menzies, also from DPI, who can take the credit for the event being so successful. Her pleasant smile and charming efficiency will stay with me for quite a while. I must also mention the CEO and staff at Mt Baw Baw who managed to make us feel at home. My special thanks to Joe who took me down the road for a fish on the Friday evening. Thanks to all of you.

The clear message was that fly-fishing is recognised as a high profile and respected sport which can bring economic benefits to many communities, and hence the government is prepared to back the research to help the rural economy.

I was delighted to hear Travis Dowling mention in his speech that the Jack Ritchie Medal had been awarded to Mick Hall, and to see the very high regard that this award has in the wider community. The VFFA does not hand it out lightly and it is great to see it used to reward and acknowledge the magnificent efforts and achievements of those who have, in a voluntary capacity, worked so hard for our trout fishery.

I was the VFFA representative at the event but also attended the CVFFC annual meeting where I was warmly welcomed as a guest by the CVFFC committee. It is clear to me that the VFFA needs to be part of this organisation to help regulate and promote our sport. There was lively debate at the meeting, similar to our own meetings, so I felt quite at home.

The event ran through to the Sunday (today) with display stalls of clothing, wine, tackle, and rods, with several well-known shops represented. There was also casting displays and some tuition for keen newcomers. Rick Dobson and Peter Morse were both on hand to demonstrate the finer points of casting to onlookers. There were also some very fine flies being tied in the pub. Mick Hall, Chris Beech, Mark Scheimer, Scott McPherson and others showed some of us the Dark Arts and at times had quite an audience spell-bound by their manipulation of the thread and feathers.

There is much that I have not touched on, people I have not mentioned, and activities not reported. I apologise to them and hope to include them in any future reports on this weekend. Subject to the results of this event and the participation by fly-fishers as well as interested new starters we could well be looking at future similar weekends being arranged. I for one look forward very much to attending.

FLY OF THE MONTH

Steve Suitor's 'Red Legged Scud'



This month's fly is from Steve Suitor, whose poem *Gone Fishin* is featured in our newsletter. Steve lives in Tasmania and fishes those highland lakes frequently. His scud patter, featured here, has defeated a lot of those cagey and wary highland browns. It's fairly easy to tie and looks very edible.

Steve's tying and fishing notes are brief: do not add weight to the fly. It must sit lightly on weeds to allow it to move from a trout's pressure wave as the fish approaches. This fly is ideal for lake tailors at Little Pine, St Clair and the Western Lakes.

Tying materials:

- Hook: Kamasan B100 size 16, or Daiichi 1130 size 16.
- Thread: Red monocord, or if available use Pearsall's Naples scarlet, No. 11A.
- Tail: A bunch of brown cock hackle fibres.
- Body: Olive seal's fur or substitute tied in with red thread.
- Legs: Brown Whiting cock saddle feather tied palmer.
- Back: Plastic from a clear plastic bag cut in a fine strip and stretched over the back of the fly.
- Rib: Round black wire, or substitute round copper wire. However the black wire looks better.
- Feelers: Dyed bright red fibres from a cock hackle.



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 |
| <i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie..... | \$20.00 |
| 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

December 2012

- 13 Christmas Dinner – 6:30 pm for 7:00 pm at the Celtic Club. This will be a celebration of 25 year and 50 year members, including the presentation of special badges. Speakers will include some of our most respected long-term members.**

February 2013

- 13 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 15 - 17 Bairnsdale Dudley Lee Donger Weekend and Bairnsdale Fly-fishers' Annual Dinner
- 16 – 22 Annual Trip to Tasmania – staying at Hayes on Brumby's
- 28 General Meeting 'Liars' Night' - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**

March 2013

- 21 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club - Speaker Bill Thomas (TBC)**
- 27 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- (29 Good Friday)

April 2013

- 11 – 14 Big River trip – staying at Enochs Point
- 18 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**
- 24 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

May 2013

- 16 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club - Annual Auction (TBC)**
- 22 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club