

FLY LINES



FEBRUARY 2019

The February 2019 Meeting: 'Liar's Night'

Yes – a return to tradition – the first meeting of the year being a review of the successes of some of our members over recent months.

Plans are afoot, and many of our members can report on interesting and challenging fishing experiences over the holiday period. Some have fished New Zealand, others have cast a fly or two in the lakes and rivers of Tasmania, and of course our local waters have been visited too. Some of our friends have done well, others have found it hard going with fish seemingly scarce or at least quite uncooperative. But we can share all of these stories with fellow members and learn from both the successes and disappointments.

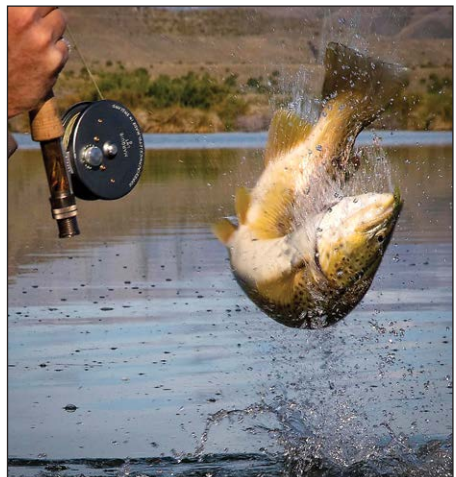
Chris Gray, Kevin Finn and Bill Fary are organising the final list of speakers. Be assured this will be a good night – a welcome opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues and hear up to date reports on what was good and what was not.

We would encourage all members to join us for what will undoubtedly be a great start to the year, but PLEASE

Thursday, February 28,
8:00 pm,
at the Kelvin Club

make a booking for dinner by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, February 27, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.

(The photo here was provided by Adam Royter. No untruths required here – a fabulous pic of a leaping South Island trout. Our thanks to Adam.)



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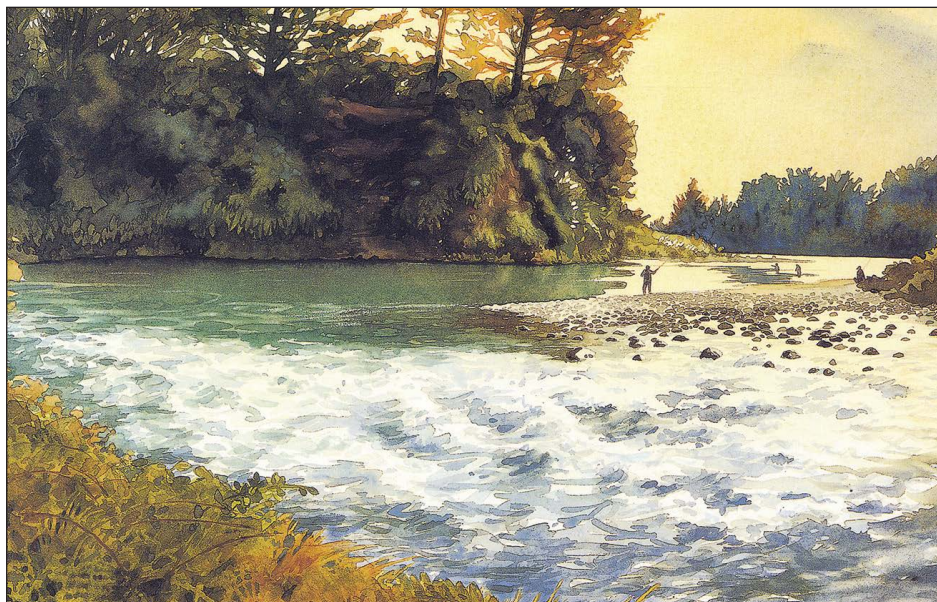
Hamish Hughes

Mike Jarvis (Immediate Past President)

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Poutu Pool Tongariro River- a Nancy Tichborne watercolour

President's Message

Happy New Year to you! I hope members and readers have enjoyed some fishing over the Christmas break, with full nets!

Our Christmas Dinner was very successful with a great turn out. John Philbrick was in magnificent form and kept as well entertained. His description of fishing Leakes Lagoon on the Goulburn at Thornton in his earlier days was enthralling and no doubt took all of us back to some of our great fishing memories.

At the dinner a number of our members received formal recognition for their service and membership with our organisation and further abroad. Lyndon Webb, our editor, received recognition from the Victorian Fisheries Authority for his 40+ years of outstanding service to fly fishing, Mike Jarvis was acknowledged for his hard work as our past president, Hugh Maltby received a well-earned honorary life membership, and Gerard Dridan was enthusiastically congratulated on his 70 years of VFFA membership.

At the time of penning these notes some of the news from a fishing perspective has not been good. The hot summer has brought with it some environmental challenges, with fish dying in the Menindee Lakes, fires in the Tasmanian central plateau, and warm river flows across Victoria. Reports from Lake Bolac and the Ovens, Howqua and Delatite rivers tell us of water temperatures as high as 27°C, with fish deaths resulting in all three rivers. Such news obviously affects our choices of fishing locations. I do hope that the recommendations of our scientists are noted and acted on by



our political leaders to find ways to limit to the extreme environmental challenges confronting us these days.

The fires in Tasmania's Central Plateau have now burnt through 12,000 hectares, and some of our members are feeling both fortunate and grateful that their shacks were saved by the army of fire fighters. Participants in our annual Tassie trip will be heading there in a couple of weeks. It is highly likely that many of our favourite Central Highland lakes will be adversely affected by the fires, so I do hope we find some fruitful fishing in the rivers.

The Australian Trout Foundation has sprung into the new year with gusto and is requesting our support with some revegetation work later in the year. These projects are well worth getting involved in and will contribute to cooler water temperatures in our rivers in the future.

The Victorian Fisheries Authority has continued to stock Eildon Pondage, with 180 rainbow and brown trout of average size four pounds stocked on January 18. The VFA has also been stocking bass, cod, trout cod and Macquarie perch across north-east of Victoria and Gippsland rivers. So this gives us lots of options to consider when we next head out. While our history is firmly associated with trout fishing, warming rivers may drive us to reconsider some alternatives.

We recently received a request from the Ballarat Fish Acclimatisation Society for us to support them in their endeavours to install a rapid sand filtration system in the Ballarat hatchery sheds. We will provide a letter of support and we hope

this helps with their future breeding programs.

The year ahead looks busy with lots of activities, the first being our annual Tasmania trip to Hayes on Brumby's, which I am really looking forward to. This will be followed by Liars' Night on February 28.

I would like to wish you all tight lines for the year ahead and look forward to seeing you at an event this year on the water or at the Kelvin Club.



The December Christmas Dinner

The 2018 Christmas Dinner was well supported, with 70 members and guests attending a thoroughly enjoyable and very entertaining evening. The food was delicious, the ambiance superb, and the guest speaker, John Philbrick, in scintillating form. The text of John's talk follows this note.

Three members were recognized during the Dinner for their service or membership. Retiring president Mike Jarvis was warmly thanked for his significant contribution to the VFFA as president, Gerard Dridan was given

an award acknowledging his amazing 70 years of VFFA membership, and editor Lyndon Webb was presented with a certificate of appreciation from the Victorian Fisheries Authority for his "service to fly fishing and trout in Victoria."



The presentation pack of Philbrick Nymphs tied by John and given to those who attended



Past president Terry Rogers presented Gerard Dridan with his award for 70 years of VFFA membership >>>



John Philbrick warming to the task



Hughie Maltby receiving his well-deserved life membership



Gerard Dridan sharing some thoughts with Secretary Kevin Finn



Chris Gray acknowledging the fine service of retiring president Mike Jarvis



Terry George (ATF President), Lyndon Webb (editor), David Grisold (past president and VFFA life member) and Taylor Hunt (representing the VFA) shared a moment for a photo

The March Meeting with Richard Kos

At the March meeting popular VFFA member and fly tying tutor Richard Kos will be our speaker. Kossy has been a keen and committed fly fisher for many years, and is a very successful one too. He is a discerning angler who is constantly experimenting and trying new ideas and has developed his skills over many seasons. On the water he is persistent and determined, and often catches fish when others don't.

Over the years he has built up a range of strategies and techniques that work for him. Accordingly he has suggested that the essence of his talk in March will be "some proven ideas and suggestions for catching more trout".

So come along on March 21 and support one of our members who will undoubtedly entertain and educate us with some great ideas.



Richard Kos, our speaker for our March meeting, is a fine and very inventive fly tier – shown here demonstrating his skills to Bill Fary

John Philbrick – VFFA Christmas Dinner 2018

Firstly, I would like to give my personal congratulations to Gerard Dridan on his 70th year of membership. Besides Bob Roles, I would probably be the only other person here tonight who has caught a trout out of the Campaspe River, the stream which Gerard fished year after year. It was a notable capture as it weighed 5 lb 5 oz. I had it smoked and it became part of the feast at Bob's wedding.



John Philbrick pioneered polaroiding in the Tasmanian highland lakes

Another thing: I nearly fell off my chair when I heard Hughie Maltby say that he wasn't scared of snakes. As a former barrister, I've represented people charged with serious criminal offences. They have had their backs to the wall and been facing long jail sentences, the breakup of their families and the disintegration of their lives. Yet the look of fear in their eyes was nothing compared with the terror I have seen in Hughie's when he has had a brush with a snake.

I don't have time to go into the details tonight, but some years ago Hughie and Choco Grisold joined Colin Morrison and myself to fish the North Esk River, which is a small stream up at Blessington in Tasmania. You would be struggling to find a section of river much more

than a metre deep. I thought that it was particularly odd when I saw Hughie putting on these massive chest waders.

Choco, who said that he wasn't scared of snakes, also wore chest waders. What's more, there are two tributary streams where you would be battling to find the water much more than a foot deep. Yet they would still wear their full chest waders when fishing these creeks. I'm not going to say anything more about Hughie and Choco and snakes – I'm saving it up for another time as it would be the subject for a lengthy speech.

Tonight I want to talk about the evolution of my nymph and the technique of polaroiding in the waves. It all started at the Melbourne Public Library in the mid-1960s, when I was about 16 or 17, and it was there that I read the chapter on polaroiding in *The Way of an Angler* by David Scholes. I became fascinated with the concept of being able to see a trout in the water before casting to it.

It wasn't long after that that I managed to get some clip-on polaroids and found myself one day on the upper King Parrot Creek, and it was there that I polaroided my first trout. I can still see that fish. It was an olive-green colour and was on station - every now and again it would move slowly to the surface and make a pinprick rise. From that moment I have been hooked on sight fishing and, in particular, polaroiding.

Now we move on to the Goulburn River which in the mid-1960s was crystal clear. Bob Roles used to call it 'Goulburn clear'. The best polaroiding, the *crème de la crème*, was at Leake's Lagoon which is a large backwater located about half a mile above Gilmour's bridge. And it was here that Bob, myself, Jim Allen, the late Brian Gordon, and others cut our polaroiding teeth.

The lagoon was about six or seven acres in size, but the actual fishable area was confined largely to a stretch of about 50 metres or so on the eastern shore, along most of which ran a line of huge, chest high tussocks. If you stood at one of the gaps in the tussocks with the water lapping against your waders and looked out into the water it was pristine, crystal clear, and there was a mat of brilliant, lime green weed growing on the bottom.

And if you waited, sooner or later, a 2, or 3, or even a 4 lb trout would swim along slowly just over the other side of the tussocks. You could see those trout so clearly – the spots on their backs, their eyes and their mouths opening and shutting. You could almost work out what sort of mood they were in that day.

The problem with catching them was that the gaps in the tussocks weren't wide enough to cast the fly out without scaring the fish. It was Jim Allen, as always, who worked out a solution to this problem. Jim would position himself at the end of a line of tussocks and wait until he spotted a trout cruising towards the other end. He would then pull back from the water and run (this was a long time ago) 10 or 15 metres along the tussocks to another gap, quickly put out his size 14 or 16 black beetle wet, and wait in ambush for the fish.

It was by using this method one sunny day that Jim caught a magnificent 4 lb 5 oz brown trout that matched the 5 lb 4 oz brown that he landed on an earlier occasion in a backwater below the Thornton Bridge. Jim has never fully recovered from the shock of hearing that the Thornton store had burned down, because, ever the salesman, he had his 5 lb 4 oz fish mounted and gave it to the owner of the store, who displayed it in pride of place on the wall behind the counter.

Now the one drawback to fishing Leake's Lagoon was that it was on the other side of the river from the bridge. To get permission to fish it you had to run the gauntlet with the farmer Mr Leake, who was fiercely protective of his property. Jim used to say that he had been a Colonel in the British Army in the Second World War. I could well believe it, because my memories of asking him for permission were of expletive ridden, military-like torrid interrogations, the central and recurring theme of which was: "Why should he, Mr Leake, allow an idiot like me onto his beautiful property?"

The only time I ever received a reasonable reception from Mr Leake in those early days followed the Saturday night when Bob Roles and I drove up to the Goulburn from Melbourne. We may have stopped off ever so briefly at the Buxton Hotel. When we arrived at the river Bob decided that it would be a good idea to ask Mr Leake at 10 o'clock at night for permission to fish his lagoon the following day.

Now Mr Leake and his wife ran dairy cattle on his property, and the house was in complete darkness. Bob got out of the car whilst I stayed cringing in it, hoping against hope that Mr Leake wouldn't realise I was there. Bob went and boldly knocked on the front door. I could hear noises in the house and then the lights came on. No-one answered the front door, so Bob went round to the back. In the meantime, an angry looking Mr Leake opened the front door, then shut it and went back inside. Then Bob came back to the front door. This charade eventually came to an end when screams of outrage, abuse and yelling made it obvious that Bob had finally made his introductions to Mr Leake.

I returned the following weekend and received a very positive response from Mr Leake. He told me about this wretched individual who had come to his house the week before smelling of >>>

alcohol and woken he and his wife in the dead of the night. I have to confess that I got a bit carried away and we almost bonded when I told him how outrageous and disgraceful I thought that this intrusion was.

With the passage of time I came to realise that Mr Leake had a heart of gold and his fierce exterior was due to a well-founded concern about protecting his property from being damaged. But before I came to that realisation there were days when I just couldn't face the interrogation. On those occasions I would fish up the river from Gilmour's bridge until I was opposite the lagoon. I would then strip off my clothes and stuff them into my Hornes chest waders and swim sidestroke across the river to the lagoon, holding my waders and my rod above the water with my left arm. It was always touch and go whether I made it to the lagoon or was swept downstream into the willows below. Looking back at those crossings, they were not for the faint-hearted.

I move on to my many trips to Tasmania dating from November 1968. At that time the conventional wisdom amongst anglers that I fished with was that polaroiding was something you did from a high bank on a river or calm, sunny weather in a lake.

Bob and Jim had their fingers on the fly fishing pulse - Bob had worked at J.M. Turville's tackle shop for many years and Jim was about to open a fishing tackle shop in partnership with Bob which was the predecessor to the Compleat Angler chain of fishing stores. They both shared the same belief as me. Moreover, in the chapter on polaroiding in *The Way of an Angler* there was no mention of polaroiding on a windy day. To reinforce this there is a photo in *Fly-Fisher in Tasmania* of David Scholes and his fishing mate Reg Clayton polaroiding Penstock

Lagoon when the water was calm and slick like.

I can't recall seeing another angler polaroiding in Tasmania in the late 1960s and early 1970s, let alone polaroiding on sunny, windy days. When the wind got up on sunny days, most of the Tasmanians would leave the water and return in the late afternoon when the sun was lower.

I move on to Lake Kay, which was a steppingstone on my path to polaroiding in the waves. In 1972 an old school mate, Rodney Whiteway and I decided that it would be a good idea to camp at Lake Kay during our summer holidays. This entailed catching a taxi from the airport at Devonport up to the Lake Augusta wall where the road stopped, and then carrying food for three weeks into Kay via Double Lagoon where we camped for the night.



Another great tale from John

I repeated this trip over the next year or so with other anglers including Graham Leith, Bob Stinson and Bob Roles. Now, I have to say that the camping spot at Lake Kay was probably the most miserable, windswept and bleak camping site on the whole of the Central Plateau. It was completely exposed to the four winds, particularly the prevailing westerlies that swept down the Little Pine valley. And

there was no firewood. Every time we camped there we endured long periods of foul, wet, windy weather. But eventually the skies would lift, a high would come across, the duns would hatch, the trout would rise, and we would enjoy some excellent dry fly fishing. Bags of 3 to 6 trout were common, with the fish averaging between about 3 and 4 lbs in weight. One memorable day on one of the lagoons above Kay, Bob landed 10 fish on an Ettrick Nymph before the hatch had even started.

So it was natural when we returned to Melbourne that Bob and I would tell Jim Allen about this wonderful fishing. We tried to persuade him to come across and join us on our next trip. He eventually agreed to do so but I don't think that we told him about the appalling weather! And this turned out to be the year when it rained and rained and the wind blew like the clappers.

It was also the year that Arthur Adams and his fishing mate Kim Jelbart joined us. I thought that it would be a nice gesture to walk to Double Lagoon where they had camped overnight and greet them. When I arrived, at the front of their tent lined up like soldiers, were several wine casks. And because it had rained all night the cardboard had peeled off the casks exposing the bladders. They were all full except for one that was empty. Looking back on those miserable conditions I have to say that I am amazed at their moderation.

Kim was quite keen on his tucker but he made the terrible mistake of delegating the catering to Arthur. Arthur's idea of catering was that they would live off the trout they caught. But the fish were virtually uncatchable, so when Bob and I had our breakfast it was quite common for Kim to come around cadging some food.

At one stage that year two anglers on trail bikes rode to the lake. They were Val Dell, who was later to become the ranger for the Central Plateau, and David Parsons, a chemist from Devonport. They were clearly moved by our miserable camp and haggard appearance and went into a huddle. They then approached us and offered to bring some provisions to us the following weekend. They almost fell over when we asked for three bottles of brandy, two wine casks, two packets of Drum tobacco and cigarette papers and a couple of steaks!

Jim's arrival coincided with a deterioration in the weather. Lake Kay, the river and the lagoons were flooded. There were waves sweeping across the grey surface of the lake and the lagoons. Nothing was hatching, nothing was rising, and we couldn't even get a fish flogging a wet.

I remembered that I had had some excellent fishing at Lake Fergus with Graham Leith in January 1970. We had walked in from Little Pine Lagoon and found that Fergus was quite high. The water had pushed back into the marshes on the western shore and there were numerous fish tailing there.

So Bob, Jim and I decided to pack some provisions and take off for a few days at Lake Fergus and stay in the shepherd's hut on the eastern shore. It proved to be the right decision as the weather improved and we had fabulous fishing. In fact Jim was so impressed that a few years later he purchased the 20,000 or so acres between Little Pine and Lake Fergus. It was the fishing equivalent of "he liked the restaurant so much that he bought it."

There were two lessons that I learned on that trip. One afternoon Bob and I were walking back along the southern shore. A strong west wind was blowing and the sun was shining from behind >>>

us, and I found I could see into the water through the waves. I suggested to Bob we should try and polaroid, but he thought it was a terrible idea as it was too windy. We had a difference of opinion on the shores of Fergus. I won that argument decisively. As we were debating the whys and wherefores of whether to polaroid, I spotted a trout through the waves and flicked my dry fly out. The trout rose and took the fly and I hooked it. That was a valuable lesson.



With my nymph a skinny thorax is the key

The morning we left was sunny and warm with a light northerly breeze. There were a few fish cruising within casting distance over the sand near where the creek flowed out of Fergus into the little Pine River. Bob and Jim caught a few of these fish. I made some good presentations but the trout moved over to my nymph and then shied away from it. Jim asked to have a look at my fly and said to me, "Philbrick - the tinsel on that nymph is too bright." I stored that bit of information away.

The next year we camped at Beginners Bay at Penstock Lagoon. Our camp was sheltered and at a much lower altitude than Lake Kay and there was unlimited firewood. Penstock was supposedly not fishing well at this time, so the plan was to use it as a base and fish either Little

Pine or the Western lakes, depending on the weather. However it didn't work out that way. For some reason we never seemed to rise in the morning before 10 am. This may have been due to the Horlick's malt drink we drank each night before we retired to bed.

One mid-morning we were eating our breakfast. Beginners Bay was very calm. Trout then started putting up massive bow waves in the bay, and now and again, huge disturbances. So of course we went out and fished for these trout and eventually one of us caught one. We did an autopsy and found that it was chockablock full of olive green mudeyes. For some reason there was an emergence, not a hatch, of mudeyes in the mid to late morning, and the biggest fish in the lagoon were moving around the edges like rockets eating as many of them as they could before the emergence ceased. We called these trout "zoomers".

We had to work out a way of catching the zoomers. Don't ask me why, but I tied some huge size 8 Red Tags with large peacock herl bodies about the same size and configuration as the mudeyes and three or four throat hackles. Amazingly, this fly worked. One memorable day Bob and I headed off from Beginners Bay to fish up to the wall, but we never reached it. There were fish everywhere and every fish wanted to eat the Red Tag. When we finally gave it away we had caught 14 browns weighing between 3 and 4 lbs. Bob got 10 and had a real red letter day, and I was very happy with my 4 trout.

But as time went by we discovered that the mudeye emergence wasn't reliable. Sometimes it didn't last long and sometimes it didn't happen at all. And it seemed to peter out towards the end of December. But what we did notice was that when the wind got up, as it did most days, it was just like the polaroiding I had seen at Fergus with Bob. You could see these big trout clearly in the windows of

the waves. That gave us the confidence to wade out and search for them. And they were quite easy to see in the waves as they cruised around close to the surface. It was very exciting fishing.

We also noticed that there were other trout feeding in a quite different way. These trout were moving very slowly around the edges. We called them "slinkers". One of us caught a slinker and found that it was stuffed full of stick caddis. This is what led me to tie my nymph. I had some basic fly tying materials and made a blend of seal's fur - about 50% brown, 25% green and then equal quantities of red, black and yellow. This produced a very natural hue. When I was tying the nymph Bob suggested that I should start the body thin, which I did. And I remembered the fish that were spooked by the bright tinsel at Fergus, so I used tarnished fine copper wire for the rib.

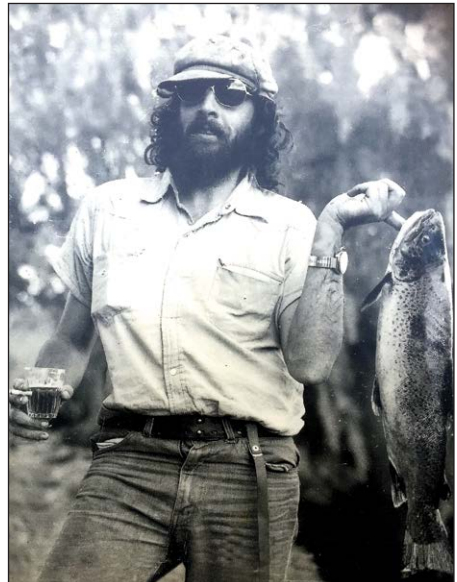
I made a cigar-shaped fly with a moderate thorax. It worked reasonably well. However, after I caught a fish or two and the thorax was chewed and became sparse I noticed that the fly seemed to be more effective. So I started tying the nymphs with a very skinny thorax. The flies that we used 45 or so years ago are identical to the nymphs that you have in the presentation boxes which you received earlier this evening.

A few words on the fundamentals of presentation. The technical prerequisites were that you had to actually see the fish within sufficient time to make a presentation. Then you had to present the fly without spooking the fish. Finally, you had to work out when the fish had taken the fly and strike. With practice many fly fishers could acquire sufficient skill to accomplish those three things.

But as time went by it became clear to me that the main difficulty with this type of fishing wasn't technical. It was

psychological. You had to have enormous faith and self-belief to head out at 10 o'clock in the morning and polaroid for hours on end when you might not see a fish for the first couple of hours, or where you might botch twenty trout when things just didn't work out. You needed to be able to persist with the belief that sooner or later there would be a fish in the right spot and you would get it. With this mindset, if you persevered often you would see two or three fish and before you knew it you would have a couple of trout in the bag in 15 minutes.

That's where my fishing friend Greg Kelly comes into the picture. Greg didn't have the fishing skills of Jim Allen or Bob Roles. Far from it. But what he did have was enormous faith, an even temperament, patience and persistence. These qualities made up for his lack of technical skills. I did most of my fishing at Penstock over those early years with Greg. I can tell you that he caught his fair share of trout despite his technical shortcomings.



Greg Kelly in his heyday

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I have a photo here of Greg. He looks like a hippie perhaps because he was a hippie. He had a wild unkempt appearance and a Che Guevara beard, which may have reflected his political views. He used to wear one of those caps that the Russian factory workers wore in the 1920s after the revolution. I wanted to feature this photo because it shows Greg enjoying three of the four hedonistic pleasures of his life. First, in his left hand there is a 6¼ lb trout taken from a stream on the Monaro. It is a magnificent fish and stands as a testament to his persistence and patience. Now if we go to his right hand we can see two of the other great pleasures of his life – the glass of beer and the cigarette. As for the fourth pleasure - I'll leave that to your imagination.

When Greg said that he wanted to go fishing with us on the Monaro this created a problem. Bob had carefully cultivated relationships with some very conservative landowners on the Monaro who had magnificent streams flowing through their properties. He would write formal letters to them each year asking for permission to camp and fish on their properties. Then we would arrive neatly dressed and groomed at the appointed time and have a pleasant conversation with the farmer on his doorstep. We

might even be invited in for a cup of tea. We would then head off and camp on the river.

But we had this problem with Greg. The two of us thought that he could be a step too far for some of these farmers, and if he wasn't, then his yapping spaniel dog Casper would be. We solved this problem. When we drove up to a homestead on a Monaro station we would leave Greg covered by a blanket crouching down under the dashboard of the car with Casper while we went to speak to the farmer.

This was the same Casper that Greg left in a hire car one day at Penstock Lagoon for an hour or so with the windows partly down. Casper was very indignant at being left alone. When we came back we found he had eaten half the upholstery off the passenger side door. Greg was then confronted with the dilemma of what to say when he returned the car to the hire car company. My only advice was to drop the car off as late as possible. But he pulled it off - he persuaded an extremely gullible hire car operator that he had inadvertently left the window open one night and a stray possum had found its way into the car and eaten the upholstery.



John Philbrick's son Andre fishing the North Esk River. As John describes it – 'a lovely little stream.'

So that was Greg - living proof that patience, persistence and self-belief can overcome technical deficiencies. I have seen other anglers polaroiding who couldn't concentrate for hours on end without catching a fish. Or they lost heart, or became stressed when they scared a few fish. I fished with Greg day after day for several years. He never became pressured or asked if he could leave the water early. He always believed he was going to catch a fish, and quite often his faith was rewarded.

It was with Greg that I fished the first day of what I call the year of the five pounders. There was a sad note to that trip as it was the first time that Penstock started to become turbid. That day the fish seemed to be about 2 lb bigger than usual. We lost all five trout that we hooked. At one stage Greg's Victoria split cane rod came apart at the ferrules while he was playing a large fish. It eventually broke off and swam away with his fly and 5 feet of leader. I caught that trout the next morning about a kilometre away from where he lost it. It weighed 5 lb 2½ oz. And I was able to return the fly and the leader to Greg.

Unfortunately, the water became progressively more turbid due to the discharge of filthy water into it from Shannon Lagoon. Eventually the northern half of the lagoon became too discoloured to polaroid. One day I was fishing Beginners Bay, which was still clear, but there was hardly a fish to be seen. It was bright and sunny and a strong north wind was blowing. I saw this fish quite a long way away moving at great speed towards the mouth of the bay. With the wind behind me I threw the nymph out and it happened to land in the right place. I struck and eventually landed the fish - it weighed 7½ lb at Jim Allen's shack that night. I'd like to think that it was close to an 8 pounder when I landed it.

Jim came down to our camp at Penstock one day in his yellow Suzuki and said to me, "Listen Philbrick - what's this polaroiding in the waves about?" It wasn't much of a day and it was quite late in the afternoon, but I said to him, "Let's go and have a look." I had a dry fly on and we waded out into the lagoon near Jack's Point. Then by sheer luck a fish came swimming along. I put a perfect cast out. As it was moving slowly up in the water towards my fly Jim said to me, "What do these fish look like in the water?" I replied, "Like that one there Jim." At this point the fish's mouth was actually opening to engulf my fly.

Then all of a sudden there was a splash in front of my trout. It spooked and rapidly disappeared out into the middle of the lagoon. Now Jim had a reputation around the four corners of the central plateau as being a stickler for angling etiquette, but his enthusiasm got the better of him that day and he cast at my trout.

But this short lesson was all that Jim needed. He was a quick learner. He took off and never looked back. Within a matter of months he was catching phenomenal bags of trout polaroiding in the Nineteen Lagoons and the Great Lake. On occasions he landed 20 to 30 fish in a session at Lake Fergus. He also caught a number of large trout in some obscure and rarely fished lagoons at the back of Double Lagoon and Lake Kay. Jim took the technique of polaroiding in the waves to a new level.

I hasten say that the polaroiding at Penstock was more difficult because the water was never totally clear. It was a rarity to see a fish swimming away from you and you had very little time to present the fly after you spotted a fish. But in the clear and shallow Western Lakes you could sometimes see fish 50 metres away.

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The word about Jim's polaroiding feats in the waves got out. The technique became popular and revolutionised the fishing on sunny days in the Western Lakes. These days there are fly fishers wading all over the Nineteen Lagoons and beyond on sunny, windy days. I could see the writing on the wall in the mid 1990s when I walked into Lakes O'Dell and Flora. I was fishing along the eastern side of O'Dell when some anglers came in behind me and walked right round the western side of the lake. When I started to walk towards Flora they ran ahead of me. So I went down to Launceston and started fishing the North Esk and other lowland rivers where I could find some angling peace and solitude.

Jim recently sent me a text message stating he drove to Lake Botsford last year only to find that there were 19 other anglers wading the lake. Whilst this technique has been revolutionary it has also been a curse.

Twenty years ago Jim called me "the father of modern day polaroiding". In more recent times he has started calling me "the grandfather of modern day polaroiding"! This is very flattering, but I have never made this claim. It is clear that there were enlightened fly fishers polaroiding in Tasmania more than 20 years before the publication of *The Way of an Angler* in 1963. In particular, John Brookes and Malcolm Gillies were using an early version of polaroid sunglasses in the late 1930s.

In his book *Lifelong Pleasure - Seventy Years of Fly Fishing* John recalled when he first used the glasses at Shannon Lagoon: "The effect was truly remarkable. There was a blank sunny ripple. On with the polaroids and there they were like a mob of sheep!" This suggests that John and Malcolm were trailblazers in polaroiding, though it is not clear whether they cottoned onto polaroiding in the waves. In the passage that I quoted John talks about

polaroiding in a ripple, but not in the waves. He makes no reference in his book to polaroiding in the waves on windy days. David Scholes knew John Brookes and in one of his books he praises John's fly fishing skills at Shannon Lagoon. But Scholes makes no mention in any of his books of polaroiding on windy days.

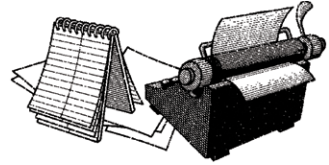
As I said earlier, I didn't see anyone in Tasmania polaroiding the shallows in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I used to start my annual trip to Penstock about 10 days before Christmas and my fishing mates generally joined me around Christmas Day. On suitable mornings I would start polaroiding near the canal, wade the entire length of western shoreline to the wall, cross it and fish the Saplings Shore and finish off the day at the south-western point of Beginners Bay where there was good vision in the mid-afternoon. I had it all to myself. I can remember fishing to some cruising trout in Beginners Bay one mid-afternoon after a successful day's polaroiding and thinking to myself, "This fishing is too good - can it last?" Sadly, it didn't.

So, can we learn from this? I think there is a lesson. When you are lucky enough to enjoy wonderful fishing as I did at Leake's Lagoon and later at Penstock you should cherish and protect it. My experience is that it rarely lasts. Penstock became progressively turbid due the discharge of filthy water into it from Shannon Lagoon. For about a decade the whole of the lagoon was turbid and unfishable. Then when the water finally cleared there were flotillas of boats on the lagoon and you could barely find 50 yards of shore to fish let alone wade from one end of the lagoon to the other. And Leake's Lagoon is now a shadow of the fishery it once was.

So on that note I want to conclude with this observation: make the most of the good days because they rarely last.



From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Sound, sound the clarion! Fill the sky! To all the sensual world affirm - One trout that's caught upon the fly is worth a hundred caught on a worm!" (Sir Walter Scott ... sort of ...)

"Calling fly fishing a hobby is like calling brain surgery a job." (Paul Schullery)

"Fly fishing is the most beautiful way of trying to catch a fish; not the most efficient, just as ballet is the most beautiful way of moving the body between two points, not the most direct. Fly fishing is to fishing as ballet is to walking." (Howell Raines)

One of the regular recipients of our monthly Fly Lines is Kylie Hall, a research scientist at the Victorian Fisheries Authority. In a recent email Kylie wrote: "could there be a greater lifetime hobby/sport/interest? Fishing, and fly fishing in particular, combines a lifetime of learning, mastery of a skill, appreciation of nature, and conservation, stewardship, community, and teamwork in what is essentially a solo pursuit." Thank you Kylie – a very perceptive depiction!"

Yes, fly fishing is lots of things. It's certainly one of the more difficult ways to catch a trout. If you want easy bags in big numbers then set lines, gill nets, or a stick of gellignite are undoubtedly more productive. But nowhere near as much fun.

Fly fishing is ferociously addictive, and also requires a lengthy apprenticeship. There are members in our Association who are relatively new to the business. They're as keen as mustard, have paid their dues (i.e. spent hard-earned dollars on quality equipment and professional lessons), have put in lots of

hours, yet have battled to catch fish. It certainly takes time and experience and persistence.

The theory is easy. It's simply a matter of finding some trout in a river or lake and then casting some counterfeit imitations of their food in front of them. Get those two things right and you'll catch trout. In theory. The trouble is that those two seemingly simple requirements are fraught with innumerable challenges.

Just finding a few compliant trout is an increasing problem these days. Melbourne is now a city of five million people in a state that has some 6.4 million. Lots of our fine citizens are keen anglers and the Victorian Fisheries Authority is keen to increase the numbers. To quote from the VFA website, "the State Government is committed to delivering its \$46 million Target One Million plan for recreational fishing, which aims to grow participation to one million anglers by 2020."

Of course we applaud this objective. Recreational fishing has so much >>>

to recommend it. It's a very healthy and worthwhile pastime. And we're also mindful that the greater the number of voting anglers in our community the keener the government will be to invest funds in our fisheries.

But the downside is that the rivers and streams within reasonable driving distance of Melbourne, where so many of us live, cop a ton of traffic and the fish in these streams are harassed with an unending barrage of worms and lures and flies. The easy ones have long since gone, and those remaining are still there because they're careful and discriminating. Fortunately these days, particularly among fly fishers, the habit is to put them back, to practice 'catch and release'. This is highly desirable in heavily fished waters because it shares the fish and the enjoyment among heaps more anglers. But it would also seem reasonable to suggest that fish that have been caught and released a number of times might have learned something from the experience.

I would suggest that the delight and pleasure in spending a few hours fishing a stream would be equally enjoyed by anyone, regardless of their skill level.

Fortunately competence can be at least partially developed by seeking information – from reading books and magazines and watching instructive DVDs. I sincerely hope, too, that the pages of our monthly *Fly Lines* provide some helpful instruction. As an example this issue carries Part 3 of Phil Bailey's wonderful material on modern nymphing. When our summer weather finally cools a bit and the temperatures of our rivers drop to more comfortable levels for our trout I for one am very keen to give his tactics a good workout.

While the hot weather persists I've focused on two of fly fishing's associated skills. I've tied some flies, and sometime soon will tip my total fly collection onto the dining room table and sort through it box by box. I'll pick out the best flies of each type that I can find and thus put together boxes of dries, nymphs, wets, emergers, etc, that are the very best flies I own. There are no guarantees I'll catch more fish with them, but I know I'll fish with more confidence if I think my flies are reasonably respectable.

I've also visited some nearby ornamental lakes, usually about twice a week, and done some casting practice. Casting a fly line is (to me anyway) a very pleasant and relaxing pastime. My spey casting is slowly improving (I hope), and it's good to cast a rod or line that hasn't been used for a while. I'm right-handed, so each session I spend a bit of time trying to cast left-handed. This too is (very) slowly improving.

I've also spent some relaxing hours hunting through my collection of books and magazines. Have I learned anything new over this summer period? I hope so. Just one small discovery to pass on – I was exploring some YouTube videos on the Tongariro Roll Cast, and somewhere in there an instructor let slip that part of the secret to success in this cast is to overload the rod by two line weights. In other words, they had found it easier to perform this rather spectacular roll cast if they put 9-weight lines on 7-weight rods.

I tried it. I put a 7-weight line on a 5-weight rod and attempted some roll casting. And it seemed to work, with pleasing distances without too much effort. So there you have it - something new to try. (Then again you all probably

knew this, and I'm the dope just catching up.)

Finally, above all else, retain your sense of hope. You never know – that next cast might connect you to the best fish of the year. And another thing - I'll possibly be out next week fishing a bit of river that has been thrashed to a foam over the

Christmas period. I couldn't care less. It's still absolutely fabulous to be out there in the midst of our wonderful bush drifting a hopper down some likely runs.

Take care,

Lyndon



Taupo Tiger - a Nancy Tichborne watercolour

This Month's Yarn ...

(... from May, 1966)

"You know, I've been really intrigued, fascinated in fact with some of the incredible ways McTaggart has caught trout," said VFFA secretary Kevin.

"Oh, you haven't heard the half of it yet," mused McTaggart, looking wistfully at his almost empty lunch glass. Kevin took the hint and quickly dug into his pocket.

Replenished, McTaggart fired up.

"I was fishing a tributary of the Mitta some years ago and had arrived at a spot about 20 yards upstream from a shallow ford, apparently put there years ago to accommodate the odd car crossing to a side road."

"I suddenly heard a noise behind me and turned to see a lavish late model Toyota

Prado entering the water. I think Hamish might have been driving it."

"Anyway, I glanced at the Prado and just happened to have my rod more or less straight out with a short length of line dangling down from it. Suddenly a gleaming object sped through the air towards me and I was startled to find my rod bending violently. A 15 inch trout had apparently been squeezed out from under the near-side front wheel of the car with such force that it shot towards me and got firmly hooked on my fly!"

"Now, I'm not saying that this trout deliberately took the fly, but it certainly wasn't foul-hooked in any way. No doubt its mouth had been wide open with surprise. I know mine was."

Notice of Major Event (NOE) for Big River, March 2019

VFFA Major Event*: Weekend trip to Enochs Point on the Big River.

Event Co-ordinator (EC): John Pilkington, phone: 0407 356 676; Email: jpilks@vicbar.com.au

Event date: Friday March 15 to Sunday March 17, 2019. Arrive in the afternoon or earlier for some fishing. Huts will be open from around midday. Leave Sunday afternoon or stay on by arrangement.

Cost/s: \$50 for the weekend to cover food and extras.

Event location & address: At Enochs Country Club, Enochs Point on the Big River.

Travel directions: Maroondah Highway, turn off just before Eildon on Jamieson Road to Big River Bridge, then 14 km upstream to Enochs Point. Detailed directions available. Approximate travel time from Melbourne is 3 hours. About 180 kilometres.

Transport requirements: Four wheel drive vehicle is not necessary.

Accommodation: In huts, basic but comfortable. Bring sleeping bag, pillow slip, torch.

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Bring own food for BBQ on Friday night and breakfasts. Lunch and evening meals supplied. Cooking on open fire, oven. Bring esky for food, drinks. All cutlery, crockery, cooking equipment, etc, supplied.

Travel insurance: NA

Description of fishing areas: Fishing is in the Big River, a medium-sized fast flowing mountain stream with rapids, runs and pools. The river is easily accessible around Enoch's Point but more demanding (and productive) fishing is available by driving and walking down long spurs to the stream. Dry and wet fly fishing. Wading is essential. Maps are available. It is a remote area.

Weather: Usually settled at this time of year, and lowish river flow, but can vary if recent rain. Forecasts will be obtained closer to the event.

Mobile phone coverage: Mobile phone coverage is now available at Enoch's Point (but only for Telstra customers).

How physically challenging: Varies from location to location - from easy to difficult.

Fishing license required: Victorian inland fishing licence required.

Strongly recommended personal equipment: Waders, wading boots, wading staff, gaiters if wet wading; brimmed hat; glasses/sunglasses, sunscreen; wet weather gear, warm clothing; UHF/VHF radio; torch; water and lunch food. PLB - especially in Remote Locations.

Essential equipment for Remote Locations: Compression bandage, UHF radio, any necessary prescribed medicines.

Guiding: NA

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to John Pilkington by March 1.

Date of issue of this NOE: January 12, 2019 (mandatory for quoting in ERF)

Event Registration closing date: March 4, 2019

The event is limited to 16 participants and applications will be accepted on a first come, first in basis.

[Please note – the Event Registration Form (ERF) can be downloaded from the VFFA website or obtained at the next VFFA general meeting]

Lake Wendouree Two Fly Competition

Again this year the Ballarat Fly Fishers are running the Lake Wendouree Two Fly competition. The media release says this:

The Ballarat Fly Fishers' Club is proud to partner with sponsor Hurley's Fly Fishing to present the Lake Wendouree Two Fly fishing competition. The event will be held on Ballarat's Lake Wendouree. The dates are Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 of March 2019. Entrants

draw an envelope containing two flies with which they fish over the two days. If a fly is lost it can be replaced at a cost. The competition winner will be based on the longest trout caught during the event. Entry cost is \$50.00

The event starts on Saturday March 30 at 7:00am, at the Lake Wendouree Boat Shed 12, Lake Wendouree Foreshore.

Web Fish

Cast regularly at vffa.org.au

About the VFFA web site:

The VFFA web site has a comprehensive coverage of VFFA events, meetings, trips, ...updated monthly making it easy to track dates and times.

Features of VFFA web site:

- Monthly Newsletter delivered to members in full colour.
 - Live access to more than five years of past Newsletters
 - Newsletter in PDF format for easy reading on computers / iPads / tablets & smart phones
 - Newsletter in PDF format can be read & saved on iPad / tablets like eBooks
 - Calendar of all activities can sync with all you digital device calendars
 - Gallery of events - Photos & Event reports
 - Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand
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Halls Island - Project Facts

Last month we published an article on this proposal by Greg French. In the interests of balance we are publishing this month a response provided by Daniel Hackett:

Update – January 2019

The background:

- The privately owned Halls Island hut was built by the Walls Of Jerusalem National Park founder, Reg Hall. In this respect Halls Island holds the important story of the birth of a national park, and is the equivalent of Weindorfer's cottage at Cradle Mountain. The protection and showcasing of this Tasmanian cultural story is a cornerstone of the Halls Island project.
- Halls Island has been under various private leases or licences since 1955, pre-dating World Heritage Listing and National Parks status. The hut itself has been privately owned since its construction and is located within the national park in a similar fashion to the large number of shacks in other parks and reserves, including Rocky Cape, Central Plateau Conservation Area (19 Lagoons and Pillans areas), and Freycinet National Park. The owners pay rates and lease to the local council and Crown.

What we're proposing

- The typical Halls Island trip will be 4 days, 3 nights. Guests will arrive by a short (~11 minute) helicopter transfer to a landing site adjacent to Lake Malbena, giving guests an important interpretative overview of the cultural landscape, geology and flora of the area. This flight path has been carefully designed to minimise potential environmental and social impacts, including routing to the eastern boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, avoiding walking routes and high-value fishing waters, minimising flight times, and flying at an altitude of +1,000 metres.
- During their stay, guests will participate in cultural interpretation relating to the history of Halls Island and the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, and low-impact activities, including guided kayaking, flora and fauna interpretation, citizen-science research activities, bushwalking, and occasional fly fishing.
- Additions to the existing infrastructure involve the installation of three minimalistic accommodation pods and one communal pod to form the Standing Camp (approximate infrastructure footprint of 65 square metres). Three short boardwalks will also be used to rehabilitate and protect two on-island Sphagnum bog communities. There will be no off-island infrastructure.

Four years of critical, State and Federal Government assessment

- The Halls Island proposal has undergone a four-year-long assessment process. The proposal fully meets the requirements of the 2016 TWWHA Management Plan which has been endorsed by the State and Federal Governments and UNESCO. Halls Island has received conditional State approval through the Parks and Wildlife

Service Reserve Activity Assessment, and has been declared 'Not a Controlled Action' after self-referral through the Federal Government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation ACT (EPBC) assessment and two rounds of public consultation.

- This Federal assessment ensures that there are no significant impacts on matters of national significance including World Heritage Values, and threatened flora and fauna. Daniel and Simone Hackett are proud to have designed a small-scale, sensitive project that has met the rigorous requirements set by the Federal EPBC assessment, which has been in place for more than two decades.

Public access will be maintained

- Generous public access arrangements will be maintained and continued; including increased public visitation levels and improved environmental management for guests to the privately-owned historical hut. All environmental management costs, including complete-capture toilet facilities for guests, will be covered by the proponents at a significant public and environmental benefit.
- Historically significant artefacts from Halls Island, Reg Hall's family and the Halls Island Hut have been assessed, collated, and donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery to form the basis of a new wilderness recreation exhibit in the near future. This donation is the single largest donation relating to Tasmanian wilderness recreation in the history of the museum.

Protecting Wilderness Values

- Contrary to claims from extreme-green groups, Halls Island is not identified as 'pristine wilderness'. In fact, Halls Island is rated as 12-14+ out of 20 for its wilderness values, based on the National Wilderness Inventory (NWI) rating. Halls Island is a location with existing substantial infrastructure, a long history of use, disturbance to the apparent naturalness, and a history of access that includes horse and sea planes. A component of the EPBC assessment of Halls Island was ensuring that there would be no significant impacts to Outstanding Universal Values / World Heritage Listed values of the area including wilderness characteristics.
- Halls Island is about engaging visitors with the amazing listed values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, and creating new advocates for Tasmania and conservation of the planet.

Helicopter Use

- The helicopter flight path has been designed and assessed to ensure that no walking tracks, routes or high-value wilderness fisheries are overflown. The flight route adheres to the eastern boundary of the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and avoids overflying the gazetted 'Wilderness Zone' for any extended period.
- Additional impact mitigation measures include flying at 3,000 feet altitude when possible, as opposed to the standard 500 feet altitude commonly flown in the area.

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- The helicopter landing site is an area of naturally exposed bedrock, located in the Central Plateau Conservation Area (CPCA) to the east of The Walls of Jerusalem. The site is not located in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park, and does not feature a constructed landing pad.
- Helicopter and aerial access have been highlighted and acknowledged as legitimate and existing activity in the original 1989 UNESCO endorsed Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) listing documents, the subsequent 1999 Management Plan, and the current management 2016 Management Plan.
- Walking commercial groups into Lake Malbena is not possible, as the walking route would need to traverse up to 3 km of Federally listed 'Alpine Bogs and Fens' (which are also World Heritage Listed as Outstanding Universal Values), and new tracks would be required – both of which are prohibited by State, Federal and UNESCO guidelines. A helicopter transfer allows minimal-impact access to the area, while avoiding track formation, erosion, loss of wilderness characteristics and impacts associated with walking tracks.
- Following on from the successful 1989 extension of the TWWHA, the 1991 'Trout Fishery Management Plan, Western Lakes - Central Plateau: Tasmanian World Heritage Area' (by Dr Robert Sloane & Greg French) was written as a managing document for the famed Western Lakes fishery. The authors acknowledged that helicopters 'provide a legitimate form of transport with minimal environmental impact, offering considerable commercial and tourism opportunities', and suggested two potential landing sites, one of which is in the vicinity of Lake Malbena (Lake Olive). While researching for the document, the authors used the private Halls Island Hut as a base, with access by seaplane and private row boat.
- Restricted mechanical access is an approved activity under the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area Management Plan. For instance, four-wheel drives and motorbikes are an approved and regularly used form of access within parts of the Western Lakes and greater TWWHA (Pillans, Julian and Talinah tracks as an example).
- The approved helicopter use equates to a maximum of ~45 hours per year, to service 30 trips per year. This results in less than 45 minutes of use on any one day, at a frequency of no more than once every four days. There are more than 300 days per year where there will be no helicopter use.

The thin edge of the wedge?

- Approximately 40% of Tasmania's land mass is World Heritage Area (TWWHA). Under the current 2016 management plan, approximately 85% of the TWWHA is zoned as Wilderness Zone, a larger land mass than ever before, and managed to be free of commercial infrastructure or helicopter landings. Only ~15% of the TWWHA is available as potential locations for commercial infrastructure such as Halls Island.

Daniel & Simone Hackett

Custodians and Lessees', Halls Island



Thoughts on kids and fly fishing

... by Philip Weigall. Philip needs no introduction to VFFA members. He is undoubtedly one of our best-known and respected writers and trout guides in the state. He is also a member of the Association, and each year contributes an article to *Fly Lines*. In this issue he ponders the important challenge of introducing young people to fly fishing.

Over the summer holidays, I've had a lot of fun helping my own 13 year old and several other kids with their fly fishing. This is something I've done with many young people over the years; both children of guests, and children of friends. I have to say (and no offence to any adults reading) there is nothing better than teaching a willing boy or girl to fly fish. The willing bit is key though. Fly fishing requires too much application to force it on anyone who isn't enthusiastic about it in the first place.

Anyway, assuming a keen, young, would-be fly fisher, here are a few thoughts fresh in my mind.

Try to pick a destination where they'll at least see a fish

It really helps the interest levels if fish are being sighted from time to time. They don't have to be easy to catch, just visible – at least occasionally. I've said 'fish', not necessarily trout, because while trout are often the main objective, if visible trout aren't easy to come by, little Australian

salmon, mullet, redbfin, etc, can make a good substitute – at least initially.

Keep expectations modest

As in life, don't oversell. A good message might be that they are likely to see a fish or two, will get better at casting, and may even persuade a fish to eat their fly.

Casting

Speaking of casting, it's obviously essential to decent fly fishing results. However, describing teaching kids to cast would be at least an article in itself, so I won't. The good news is that young people who want to learn to cast do so very quickly and easily. Patient instruction from a skilled friend or professional will soon get a result.

Appreciate that the whole experience is likely to be new and fun

Recently, while pushing through a willow thicket lined with an understorey of ferns beside the Rubicon, my son stopped and said, "Wow, this is just like being in a rainforest!" I'd always thought of that thicket as no more than a pesky obstacle



Kids remind us that there's more to fishing than catching fish

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on the way to the river! Stopping for an ice-cream at the general store, seeing a wombat or lizard, driving through interesting countryside ... it's all part of a great day.



Every fish should be celebrated, no matter the size

Pretend to be a fish to demonstrate the hooking/playing bit

Yes, I know I said we should keep expectations modest, but given the incredible rate at which engaged young minds learn new skills (coupled with youthful eyes and reflexes) means more often than not, a fish eats the fly.

The occasion to educate in correct striking and playing IS NOT when your charge first has a fish eat their fly. Instead, in preparation for this big moment, with the youngster holding the rod, swallow your pride, wrap the hookless leader around your hand, and pretend to be a fish! Make it slow-motion at first: describe the fish eating the fly, then make sure the rod lift is swift but not violent. ("Just like lifting off to make a cast," isn't a bad analogy.)

Next, encourage them to keep the rod tip up, and to manage the line by hand at first, not using the reel. This takes a bit of getting used to, so be patient. Teach them early not to 'rope-climb' and not to let the rod tip gradually drift down to snap-off position (two almost universal tendencies if not corrected). Eventually,

pull enough line that they end up 'on the reel' – a desirable outcome, especially with any fish of a decent size. The big thing here is, they learn that holding the reel handle locks the drag: essential and counterintuitive information for any kid who's previously used a conventional threadline or baitcaster reel.

Follow their lead when it comes to energy and enthusiasm

Kids can be a bit unpredictable. One 12 year old I guided before Christmas was looking pretty worn out and ready to quit by late afternoon (perfectly okay – I was ready for a break myself). Then he sight-fished a 3 pound brown on a dun pattern, and got his second wind. Three hours later, it was dark and he was still going hard! His dad had to insist he come in for dinner.

I guess that was a fairly predictable response in some ways, but it's not always so. Kids can sometimes want to fish – or not – at times that don't necessarily make a lot of sense to us. They can walk off the water half an hour before a great rise, or feel like persisting when the best fishing is over and it actually would be smart to take some time out. By all means, try gently persuading youngsters to stay or go as appropriate, but don't push it. Kids get hungry, thirsty, tired and bored more quickly than us – and not always at opportune times!



Getting a tangle out while there are fish rising. Just take a deep breath – the fish will still be there in a minute or two... hopefully!

Now is as good as it gets

It's one thing to say, 'Shoulda been here last week'; it's another to carry on about how good the fishing used to be years or decades ago. First of all, the recollection is usually incorrect, being an amalgamation of the brain's tendency to recall good days over bad, and declining fly fishing time and effort/endurance (dare I say even ability) with age. Second, even if, by objective standards, a particular destination no longer performs as well as it once did, there's not much value in pointing this out – unless you have access to a time machine.

Every fish is a victory

No matter the size, any fish caught on fly is a fantastic result for any kid, so treat it as such. My son has been fortunate enough to catch some big fish already, but he's almost as genuinely thrilled to catch an eight-incher on the Steavo. (Come to

think of it, that should always be the case regardless of our age.)

Fun First

Above all, fly fishing should be about fun. Treat any badly-timed tangles, missed strikes, spooked fish, etc, with a concealed deep breath, a 'never mind' shrug, and, when the time is right, some gentle advice about how to avoid the same issue next time. Like adults, few kids deliberately stuff up when trying to catch a fish, so try not to show your own frustration – it will only add to their disappointment.

We have quite a responsibility in framing those powerful early impressions of the sport. Hopefully, we're setting up the young person in question with a relaxing, stimulating – even therapeutic – pastime for life.



As good as it gets! Releasing a hard one beauty



European Nymphing – Part 3

... by Phil Bailey

Members will recall that our August and September issues last year included parts 1 and 2 of an extended article on European Nymphing by Phil Bailey. These contributions drew a lot of interest. Phil has written a part 3 on his approach to European Nymphing. It was written last year and he revised it late in the year and has made it available to us.

By now you should be getting a good idea that the new approach to nymphing is becoming quite technical. Far more thought needs to go into effective nymphing than other fly fishing methods, but don't let that faze you. Stick with trying to understand the various elements and applying them. Experience counts for everything in the end.

In Parts 1 & 2 we mainly concentrated on technique and how to fish the deeper parts of a river or stream. In this final part we are going to discuss how to effectively fish the shallower sections - the tails of faster water and those slower sections of the river where most people pay little attention.

The French and Spanish competition anglers are masters at producing fish from these parts of the rivers or streams. The Spanish especially have been able to top the international competition scene for a few years now.

The French Nymphing technique was developed to fish for timid fish in very clear low waters using small nymphs. Their success came from their ability to deliver a very long leader upstream of a sighted fish and strike when they thought the fish had taken one of the nymphs. Unfortunately this only works in crystal clear water, something we lack in Australia (or even northern England for that matter) in any quantity.

While the Spanish technique was also developed to fish for small timid fish

in mountain streams using what we now know as Perdigon Nymphs, their technique is very well suited to tails of fast water and the slower waters you quite often find in rivers and streams. These are what I termed 'sub-prime' lies in Part 1. You are effectively searching for fish.

So how do we go about attacking these areas? Firstly, you do not need to change any part of your set up. However there two things that are crucial to getting it right – correct weighting of your nymphs and visibility of your indicator. Let's start with the latter before we move to fishing these 'sub-prime' areas.

Indicator Visibility

While some of the indicator materials we use are reasonably visible when they are held above the water, quite often they lose their opaqueness and visibility



Colourful Neon Wax gives flotation and high visibility

when laid along the surface or at an acute angle above the water. Competition anglers and astute nymph fishermen try to overcome this by applying floatant to their indicator.

Mucilin or even Vaseline work very well as floatants but do not enhance visibility. These are okay in a pinch, but there are special waxes available to enhance the colours. As I use a combination of Opaque White, Yellow/Green and Red/Purple as indicators I need to be able to see all of this. I use Neon Wax in White, Yellow and Red and by applying this wax to my indicator I get high visibility and floatability when it is either floating on the water or held at an acute angle just above the surface.

Correct Fly Weight

As we are basically leveraging off the Spanish technique, we need to consider how to correctly use weight in order to fish these shallower areas. In parts 1 and 2 we were trying to get right down to the bottom and then drift the flies along the bottom, so we were suggesting heavy flies. In this article we are going to be more assertive in our approach and “lead” the flies through the water, so the flies are lighter.

We need an ‘anchor fly’. The ‘anchor fly’ allows you to apply tension as you fish through runs and tail outs. You may have heard the saying “the point fly is a sacrificial fly”. That may have been true in the Polish and Czech Nymphing styles but in the converged style now termed ‘European Nymphing’ it is very much an active part of your set up and especially so in what we do when fishing these shallower areas.

So you need a fly with sufficient weight to get to the bottom but not so heavy that it continually gets snagged up. It needs to bounce along the bottom. Generally speaking this requires no more than a

3mm bead, though sometimes it might need to go as low as 2mm in very slow water.

Let’s discuss how to fish these sub-prime areas.

The Set Up

This is important to get right. As we have discussed you need an anchor fly. I try to select a fly that you might term an ‘attractor’. It will have a bright bead, movement and a bit of colour, especially in the tail. Something like this:



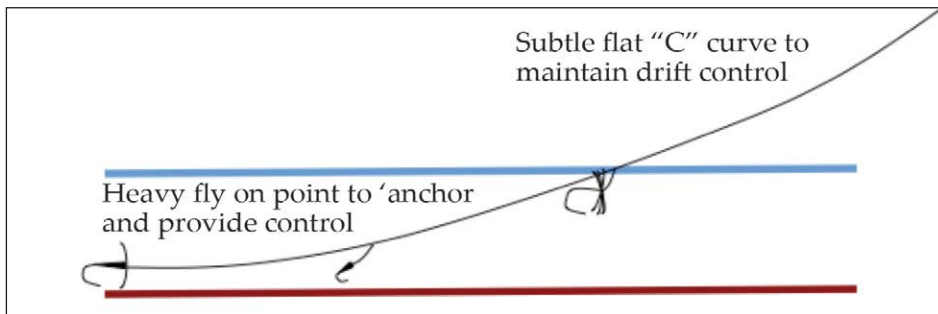
Choosing an anchor fly is critical

Once you have selected the point fly then you need to consider the dropper or even multiple droppers. The dropper fly will be much lighter in weight, perhaps as low as having a 2.0mm to 2.5mm bead, or even no weight at all, as in a soft hackle. In fact I use two droppers with the lower dropper weighted and the top dropper a soft hackle.

The Technique

In parts 1 and 2 we advocated trying to get to a ‘dead drift’ situation. When fishing shallow water such as small gutters or tail outs there is generally not enough water speed or depth to allow this without hanging up on the bottom. So we need to take more control over the whole drift.

>>>



Start by positioning yourself at the side of the water you want to cover. This is definitely where the 'Grid and U' discussed in part 1 comes into play. You also should be square on to the run you are going to nymph. Make as long a cast as you can manage upstream. Try to use only the leader because anything longer and you will lose control. Lay the whole leader along the water surface. This is where 'Indicator Visibility' discussed above comes into play. You need to be able to see it.

As soon as the cast is made you need to get control of the leader by pulling in any slack with your non-casting hand. Remember to keep the line under your casting hand index finger just in case you need to strike immediately.

It is important that you do not 'pull' so hard that you accelerate the drift. Timing is everything here. The point fly needs to drop to the bottom before you do anything else.

Now raise the rod tip slightly. You definitely do not want to have it too high as you will lose strike control. As the flies drift back to you start to retrieve line and slightly raise the rod tip. You should see a flat 'C' curve in your leader.

No curve and you are too tight. A big curve and you are out of control.

Because you have total control of the drifts you will 'feel' the takes by the fish rather than see the indicator move.

As the flies drift back towards you and the tip of the rod lifts, the indicator will start to lift off the water surface. At this point you can start to watch for any movement and 'strike'. It is possible to lift the rod point higher and let the flies drift downstream. This works but the overall intent here is to nymph upstream under control.

Now move to the next section in the grid and repeat. You want to cover all of the water. Using this technique the Spanish team were able to take first place fishing the side waters in very fast rough rivers in Italy where they fished the creases off to the side extremely effectively.

So to recap. You need to make sure you can see your indicator as it floats on the surface. This is more important the further upstream you cast. You need to get the weight of the flies right otherwise you will hang up. Consider soft hackles as droppers as the hackle movement is enticing. And you need to get in control of the drift as fast as you can without 'pulling' the flies towards you. And finally, you need to fish quickly and cover a lot of the water.

I hope this final article helps you fish more of the river with success.

Philip Bailey, Yorkshire UK



Bream on Fly

Many of us are contemplating the prospect of doing some saltwater fly fishing. Some of us have actually given it a go. Peter Hussey is a member of the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club and has been fly fishing for just over 30 years. Although spoilt for trout fishing in the Warrnambool area, a few years back he decided to fly fish the local estuary systems for bream. And in this he has been singularly successful. Here is his account of how to go about it.

My early years of bream fishing, with bait, had taught me that bream can be found in water just deep enough for them to swim in or in water that is metres deep. They are a school fish and are very easily spooked.



Bream are tricky but not impossible. Peter Hussey caught these two fine bream in the Hopkins River estuary at Warrnambool.

When fly fishing for bream I have found that a push-in tide is essential; and more important than the time of day. The push-in tide not only puts the bream in feeding mode, it also allows you to position yourself correctly to swing your line and fly to the fish, rather than casting on top of them, which invariably spooks them.

As for gear, I use a 5 - 7 weight rod. Smaller if you wish, but remember you would not be the first to hook a mulloway while bream fishing. My line of choice is a clear Scientific Angler Intermediate, sinking at 1.5 - 2 inches/second, allowing me to fish different depths. I use 9 - 10 foot



A fine haul and great eating too

of fluorocarbon leader, ending with 7 lb tippet.

For flies, Muzz Wilson's BMS (see *FlyLife* magazine issue 23) in olive, black, white and even orange work well, tied with a few strands of crystal flash in the tail. I rib the fly with the same material. On the sandflats a small crab fly also works well.



Adrian Jacobs, president of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers, was getting the hang of it too >>>

One other fly I use regularly is very nondescript. The fly is tied on a jig hook. It has bead chain eyes tied in at the eye of the hook, with a short tail and a body of Fuzzle, not ribbed but brushed backwards with Velcro. This fly rides hook up, making it a very good bottom fly. (See the photo.)

Retrieves can be as complicated as with trout. What works well one day doesn't work the next. A very slow retrieve with long pauses works well for the crab. With the other flies, mix it up like you would with trout, but add lots of pauses. Bream often follow the fly and take it when it stops.

Best time of year in our area is March to July. I don't fish for bream in October



Effective bream flies. Just some of the flies that Peter uses.

through to January, as this is their spawning time.

I have found fly fishing for bream very rewarding. They are a great fighting fish for their size. and are good eating. So why not give bream a try.

Cheers, Pete



Gordon Baker – well done!



FLY OF THE MONTH

John Philbrick's Nymph



Coming off the back of a very successful Christmas Dinner with highly entertaining speaker and VFFA legend, John Philbrick, where all those attending were presented with two Philbrick nymphs tied by John himself, we thought we should run the pattern again for those unable to attend. The nymph was our 'Fly of the Month' in the September 2008 issue, but is certainly worth another look.

John has described the development of his nymph, which in fact is highly effective and thus a very popular fly among anglers fishing Tasmania's highland lakes.

John has provided the following notes on his fly:

This fly was devised about forty-five years ago at our camp at Beginner's Bay at Penstock Lagoon to be specifically used when polaroiding large stick caddis feeding trout in the shallows of this famous water. The body was comprised of a dubbed blend of seal's fur - about 50% brown, 25% olive green with equal quantities of black, yellow and red making up the residue. This blend produced a natural hue.

My first attempt at the fly had a skinny, slightly tapered body but a relatively normal thorax. I had some success with this original pattern but found that it worked better after it had caught a few trout and the thorax became sparser. I then started tying the fly with its characteristic skinny thorax. I also clip the loose seal's fur and compress the body with my thumb and finger so as to accentuate its thin appearance.

This is not a “magic” fly. Magic flies don’t exist. For three main reasons it is a useful fly to use when polaroiding shallow lagoons. It is a light fly and doesn’t sink quickly. It is frustrating to make a good presentation to a cruising fish only to find that the fly has sunk and snagged something on the bottom. I have never had a trout take a snagged fly and my almost invariable experience is that if you pull the fly free, the trout is spooked. It is equally frustrating if the fly does not sink. This nymph will sink, even if you have not made a presentation for hours on a hot, dry day. And finally, the trout seem to like it.

Polaroiding for cruising trout in the shallows is technically difficult. First, you must spot the trout within sufficient time to make a good presentation. If you cannot do this, all is lost. And it is essential to get the first presentation right. Most of the time when wade polaroiding, you do not get the luxury of a second chance. If you do make a good presentation, you must discern if and when the trout takes the fly. If you see the white of the mouth of the trout when it is near the fly and strike you will usually connect with the fish.

If you don’t see this sign, it is more difficult. In my heyday (which was too many years ago) I developed a seventh sense and found if I instinctively struck, I usually hooked the fish. But after hooking it I would be unable to identify what it was that made me strike. Jim Allen had the same experience. A useful tip is that if you lose your vision of the fish keep the line tight and give nymph a slight twitch or two. Often this results in a hook up.

I have also enjoyed success with this fly polaroiding the large trout of the sluggish rivers of the Monaro, the pastoral streams in the Southland of New Zealand, the famed chalk streams in Hampshire including the River Test and some of its tributaries, the San River in Poland, Brumbys Creek in Tasmania, and Leake’s Lagoon on the Goulburn River.

The shallows of Lake Hawea and the South Mavora Lake provide similar fishing to that which is to be found in the shallows of the lagoons of the Tasmanian Central Plateau. This nymph is very effective on these waters on bright, sunny, windy days. As always, the key factors to success on all these waters are spotting the fish, making a good presentation, and striking at the right time. It sounds so simple. Let me assure you, it is not!

Having the right frame of mind can be as important as the technical requirements of this style of fishing. In order to succeed one needs intense self-belief and faith that sooner or later the piscatorial stars will align and a fish will be seen and hooked. It takes a lot of faith and determination to persevere for hours on end without getting a single chance to cast at a fish. But the rewards can be great. One day at Penstock when the water was slightly turbid and the fish were few and far between, the rest of our party went to fish the hatch at Little Pine. I persevered at Penstock, had three chances for the whole day and landed a brace of trout on my nymph which weighed in at 5lbs 2oz apiece. This feat gave me an immense feeling of satisfaction that I remember to this day.

Tying Notes

Thread: Brown or black. (Pearsall's silk thread was used on the original pattern.)

Hook: 10 - 14 nymph hook. (The original pattern was tied on a Captain Hamilton hook.)

Body: Seal's furs blended as described.

Whisks: Brown cock

1. Tie in the thread near the eye and wind it towards the bend of the hook, tying in whisks and the copper wire.
2. Dub the seal's fur blend thinly on to about 6 centimetres of the thread and wind it on in a clockwise direction. Start the fly off extremely sparsely near the barb. If necessary dub some more fur onto the hook to complete the body.
3. Rib tightly in an anti-clockwise direction and tie the rib securely down with the thread. The body should be very thin and the taper should be slight.
4. Progressively wind on more dubbed seal's fur to form the thorax, form a head with the thread, and tie off. Be careful to ensure the thorax is not too pronounced. Overall, the nymph should have a skinny appearance.

John's final note: This fly should be tied so that it is quite thin but with a noticeable but not unduly pronounced thorax. The tying thread should be well waxed and the fur dubbed on tightly to eliminate minute air pockets. I use fine tarnished copper wire to rib the fly as I have found on bright sunny days in Tasmania that trout will sometimes shy away from a fly ribbed with bright tinsel. Once the fly is tied, carefully clip off all the excess seal's fur so that it is a very tight, compact fly. This ensures that if it is kept moist it will sink, but at a slow rate.

VFFA 2019 meetings & other activities

February 2019

- 4 Monday First Council Meeting for 2019 at 6:30 pm
16 – 23 Tasmanian Trip to Hayes on Brumby's
Event Co-ordinator – Hughie Maltby
28 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club,
“Liars’ Night” – reports by members on their summer fishing

March 2019

- 15 – 17 2019 Big River trip
Event Co-ordinator – John Pilkington
21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
Speaker – Richard Kos, popular VFFA member
25 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm
30 & 31 Donger Weekend – annual competition with the Bairnsdale Fly
Fishing Club members at their lodge on the Mitta River

April 2019

- 11 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
Speakers – Antony Boliiancu and Bo Nikolic from Goulburn Valley
Fly Fishing Centre (TBC)
19 – 21 Easter weekend 2019
29 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

May

- 16 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club: Annual Auction of
books and equipment
27 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

June 2019

- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Taylor Hunt, VFA Manager of “Freshwater Fisheries in
Victoria”
24 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2018 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Tackle Outfitters • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Essential Fly Fisher Launceston • *FlyLife* Publishing • FlyFinz Fishing Tackle and Books • Gavin Hurley's Fly Fishing & Pro-Angler • J.M. Gillies Pty Ltd
- Mayfly Tackle Pty Ltd • Peter Hayes • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne