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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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Organisation No. A0024750J

C/- The Kelvin Club, 14-30 Melbourne Place, Melbourne 3000

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

**PRESIDENT**

Peter Boag  
Tel: 9389 8003 Bus  
9690 1017 A/H

**HONORARY TREASURER**

Tony Mitchem  
Tel: 9832 8405  
0407 309 797 Mob

**HONORARY EDITOR**

Lyndon Webb  
Tel: 9801 6151  
Email: [lgwebb@bigpond.net.au](mailto:lgwebb@bigpond.net.au)

**VICE-PRESIDENT**

(& Website Administrator)  
Rick Dugina  
Tel: 0401 963 601 Mob  
9370 9328 Fax

Email:  
[edugina@iprimus.com.au](mailto:edugina@iprimus.com.au)

**HONORARY SECRETARY**

Richard Garvey  
Tel: 9370 5958 A/H  
0412 150 190 Mob  
Email: [garvey@connexus.net.au](mailto:garvey@connexus.net.au)

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

John Pilkington  
Tel: 9225 8616 Bus  
9489 2186 A/H

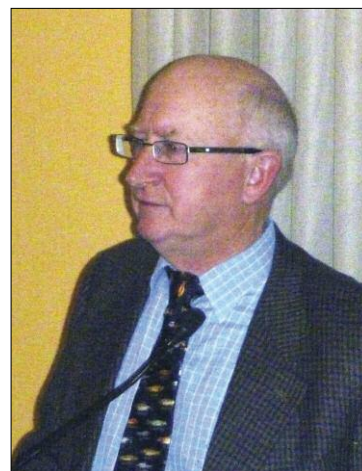
**NEXT MEETING – GUEST SPEAKER: JIM BLAKESLEE**  
**(TOPIC: THINGS ARE CHANGING – WE NEED TO BE FLEXIBLE)**  
**AT THE KELVIN CLUB, 8:00 PM, THURSDAY JULY 15, 2010**

## June Meeting - Glenn Eggleton

Glenn is the author of the recently published *Jet-Fly: The Life and Flies of Noel Jetson*. Noel was Australia's first full-time professional fishing guide, and Glenn fished with Noel as a client for many years. Glenn began with an apology for the fact that a short film featuring Noel in action, which was to be shown as part of the presentation, had somehow been lost. So instead he spoke at length on the life of Noel Jetson. The following is a summary of his talk.

I am going to assume that all who are here tonight know Noel, or know of him. You have read the book, or have come across him on the back shore of Little Pine, or have bought flies or other fly fishing gear from his store at Cressy.

The last time I saw Noel was in December last year. He came up to stay at my place in the Central Highlands, and when he arrived he said to me, "I know who you are but I don't know your name. It's good to be back here again, I really enjoy it. My brain is stuffed but I'm glad to be here." Two weeks later he couldn't even remember that he had been up at my place two weeks earlier. He knew who was there and he knew who my wife was, but he couldn't remember our names. He is truly unhappy and truly living the life of a recluse, because, as he says, "his brain is stuffed". He gets out of bed at about three in the afternoon, and in fact just wants to stay in bed all day. That, unfortunately, is how Noel's life is ending. He used to be up at three in the morning to go out guiding or tying flies and was totally active every day of his life, helping other people.



*Glenn Eggleton*

I rang Noel on his birthday last February and it distressed him that he didn't know who I was. It distressed me too. I haven't spoken to him since, but I ring his daughter each week to find out how he is, and sadly, it is a downhill progression. The good news is that Noel would say to me, "Mate, we had a ball. We saw the best of it. We did what we wanted to do, and it was fantastic. I wouldn't want to change anything."

Noel used to say to me when we were sitting up in my cabin at Little Pine, with the snow falling all around, "Mate, you work too hard! You're stressed! You've got to get out as soon as you can. Go and enjoy life. Retire. Go fishing."

If we think in terms of Noel's life, fly fishing transformed his life. He came from very humble beginnings. He was born on Flinders Island, and grew up at Tarraleah in a house that was built of palings and calico, with a dirt floor. It was freezing cold and had newspaper insulating the walls. When he was 20 years old he married Lois, who was 19. They went to Hobart for their honeymoon, and this was the first time Noel had seen Hobart. I can still remember Lois saying to me, "We had no money, Glenn, and I mean - no money." They had nothing. They were later to travel the world, and Noel fished in America and Finland and England and Scotland. And it was all because of fly fishing. Fly fishing made an incredible difference to Noel's life. It was a wonderful life that he enjoyed immensely.

Noel had always been a fisherman. He had fished with bait and had been a spin fisherman. But he had a neighbour called Reg Cabalzar. Some of you may have read Reg's books – that

collection of rather weird little fishing books. Anyway, Reg wound up as Noel's next door neighbour, and Noel saw Reg practising his casting in the backyard. In due course Reg took Noel on some fishing trips, the first being to Tungatinah. They arrived late at night, and Reg pulled some old carpet off the back of his truck and said, "Well, that's where we're going to sleep. Just pull some carpet back over yourself." Now there was only thing that Noel was ever afraid of, and that was snakes. Sleeping there for the night on an old piece of carpet – well, Noel didn't sleep at all. He's told me that story a thousand times.



Reg Cabalzar had a big influence on Noel in getting him into fly fishing. So, too, did Noel's time at the Examiner newspaper, because he worked there with the strangest collection of crazy fishermen imaginable. Clyde Spencer was there, and he was passionate about his fishing, and absolutely passionate about the Western Lakes, and Noel was thrust into his company when he started at the Examiner. Noel was also thrust into the company of David Scholes, who was another fanatical fly fisherman.

However fly fishing wasn't a natural thing for Noel. He had great difficulty in learning to cast and in casting accurately. He struggled, and he flogged the water unmercifully in trying to catch a fish in those early days. It wasn't until 1962, when he was 29 years old, that he spent twice his weekly wage on a second-hand fly fishing outfit. We might reflect on how we would have felt in those days, spending two week's salary on a fly outfit. Fly fishing gear is so cheap these days, and fly fishing is no longer the sport of the wealthy. So we can appreciate that when Noel invested that amount of money, he was clearly very determined to become a proficient fly fisherman.

Through David Scholes Noel met Dick Wigram, and for three years he fished with Wigram on the rivers and with Clyde Spencer on the Western Lakes. Then from about 1965 onwards he fished with Scholes. But in 1962, he not only fished with Wigram but he also did Wigram's fly-tying course. And he became a superb fly tier and was extremely efficient, not wasting any of the materials. He was like a machine, and was tying from 180 to 200 flies a day. This was production fly tying, and he absolutely loved doing it. So this got him started in the business of tying flies.

Something that amazed me was that a fly he tied very early on was his Orange Quill. The first fish that he caught on a dry fly was on this fly - his Orange Quill. He designed it, then tied it, and then used it. Many of us have caught our first fish on a fly that we tied ourselves, but to have also designed that fly is something rather remarkable.

Noel fished furiously for a number of years. He was out every weekend - one weekend on the rivers and the alternate weekends up on the Western Lakes. Then in 1967 or 1968 he took his long service leave from the Examiner newspaper where he had worked for about 19 years, and decided that it was time for a change. Very typical of Noel, he just decided to head to New Zealand. He said to Lois, "I've had enough of this, I haven't got enough time to fish. I'm going to take a year's holiday. We'll go to New Zealand". So off he went - at age 34, with three

children, his wife, and a station wagon with a box on the top containing all his camping gear. For the first year he fished and hunted and had a great time. And guess what - he ran out of money, so had to get a job. He worked for the Otago Daily Times, then moved on to work in a sports store in Dunedin, tying flies. He also worked with a very good rod maker there, and he loved making rods and tying flies. He tied flies during the day, and also at home at night to supplement his income. All the while he used his weekends to fish the great South Island rivers.

Then he was faced with a very difficult choice – whether to stay in New Zealand or to return to Tasmania. He was encouraged to open up a sports store in Wanaka, as there was no sports store there in those days – flies were sold through the local barber’s shop, along with other fishing gear. He very nearly stayed, and what a loss he was to New Zealand and to Wanaka. But home weighed heavily and family weighed heavily, so he returned to Tasmania.

He corresponded with Dick Wigram about the opportunity of becoming a professional fly tier in Tasmania, and he decided that this is what he would do. The day after he returned he hadn’t purchased a fishing license so he went out fishing with Dick Wigram but just watched Dick fish. This was the last day that Dick Wigram ever fished, because the next day Dick crashed his car and had a heart attack and died. So Noel had the opportunity, in Dick’s absence, to be the principal fly tier in the northern part of Tasmania, though it certainly wasn’t an opportunity that he sought. And that is what he did, tying hundreds of flies each day, whilst also working as an inland fisheries officer, and as shearer, as well as trapping possums and doing various other jobs.

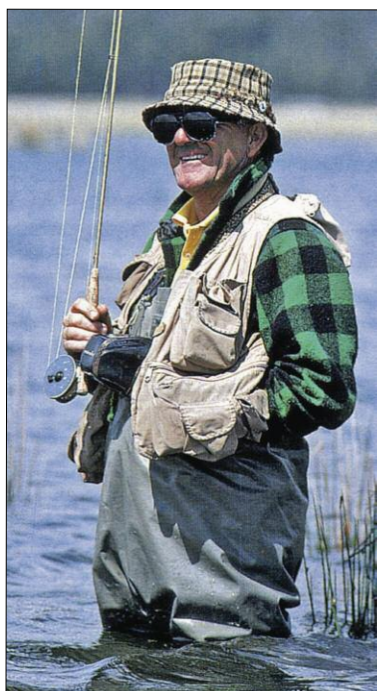
Then he saw that there was an opportunity for him to become a full-time fishing guide. Lois had been appointed to run the Commonwealth Bank and Post Office at Cressy, so they had a secure income. Without Lois’s support he would never have been able to venture into guiding. So he went ahead and renovated his house and the bunkhouse, and despite everyone telling him that he was mad, he had 108 guests in his first year. Among his guests and clients were a number of well-known anglers, including Mike Weddell, the British fly casting champion. Don Burrows, the famous jazz musician, also stayed there. Burrows was a very keen fly fisher, and in 1974 a film was made of his life, featuring Burrows fishing with Noel as his guide.

From this time on Noel was full-time guiding, with lots of clients every year, and he was having a ball. When I interviewed him and went through his diaries I discovered that in his early years of fly fishing he kept meticulous records, but when he commenced guiding his diaries deteriorated. The entries became very cryptic regarding details of clients and what they did and how many fish they caught. When I asked Noel for more information on some of his clients all he said was, “Man they had a ball.” He could never tell me what actually happened.

In 1989 Noel was asked by the Tourist Department of Tasmania to assist in making a film promoting Tasmania. Six very famous American anglers were invited out to feature in the film – Al McClean, Mel Krieger, Jerry Gibbs, Keith Gardner, Frank Bertaina, and Bob Nauheim (all being doyens of American fishing). Noel took them to Lake Pedder, because he had been told to take them there, as that’s where there were lots of very big fish to catch and this would look good on the film. Unfortunately the weather at Pedder was dreadful, so he brought them back to Brumbys, where they had a great time and some excellent footage was captured of these US anglers catching fish. However it was subsequently discovered that, because the weather had been so foul, there wasn’t enough footage for a half hour film. So the following Christmas Noel took his sons and the camera crew out to the Western Lakes. On one occasion it snowed all day and they were filmed fishing in the snow. But they had another day when the

sun came out and they had a brilliant day's fishing.

Noel took the film to America and showed it at various fishing expositions. He had learned a lot from those fishermen and he learned a lot from that trip. He decided that he needed to go back to America, and to England, to promote Tasmania and to promote his guiding business. Typically of Noel, he borrowed \$10,000 from the bank and took Lois around the world to promote Tasmania and to promote Jetfly. These days of course one would no doubt be subsidised by the government, but Noel never got a penny from any government department for any of the things that he did.



*Noel Jetson (photo from FlyLife magazine, Issue 6, used with permission)*

However he learned a lot on the trip. He picked up the distributorship for Winston rods in Australia, and sold Winston rods and made up Winston rods from blanks. He also brought back the concept of running fishing schools, similar to those run by Orvis and other companies. So he ran fishing schools from Bronte, with the help of Ken Orr and others, and over 290 people went through Noel's fishing schools. They were a great success. He also got the idea of setting up a fishing guides' association. There was only a handful of guides operating in Tasmania at this time, but nevertheless the Guides' Association was set up to ensure that quality was preserved.

1981 was my first trip out with Noel – I was 32 and Noel was 48. I still recall my two only fish for a week's fishing, both taken from Bronte. But it was great fun and I was determined to go back to Noel as often as I could and as often as work permitted in those days, which was never as often as I would have liked. Two weeks in the year was the minimum, with one week on the rivers and one week on the Western Lakes.

Because of the leave arrangements in the law firm where I was a partner, I was able take 10 week's holiday each year. Five of those weeks would be spent with Noel.

When I fished with Noel he always fished too, and of course always caught many more fish than I did. Most modern fishing guides don't do this and would be horrified. But some other Tasmanian fishing guides at this time, such as Bill Beck, would also fish. I formed the view that I was lucky to have a fishing guide who fished, because I could see how to fish. I was doing my best, but watching someone else fish seemed to me to be a better means of my learning, rather than simply being shown a fish and being told to try to catch it. I found a quote in Charles Ritz's book, *A Fly Fisher's Life*, suggesting that he would travel hundreds of miles to see a very good angler fish, and to talk with him and interview him, because Ritz would learn so much. Well, if Charles Ritz can learn from watching someone else fish, I can certainly learn a hell of a lot by watching Noel Jetson fish. So I must say that I have benefited greatly by having a fishing guide who fished. That won't change anything of course, because none of the modern guides will fish.

Then in 1988 a marvellous thing happened - the World Fly Fishing Championships were held in Tasmania. Noel was very enthusiastic about it as he thought that it would be a great thing for the state. He threw his weight behind it and was given the job of guiding and helping the

British Fly Fishing Team. He became great friends of these people. Noel visited them and had some wonderful fishing in England, and they came back repeatedly to Tasmania to fish with him. The English team of course won those championships, and this no doubt helped cement his relationship with them.

Then in 1994 Lois had a heart attack, and Noel did a totally unselfish thing which was very typical of him, but which I found hard to digest at the time. He decided to finish up. He said, "I'm selling the shop and giving up guiding and I'm spending the rest of my time with Lois." And that's exactly what he did. There are just four clients who continued to fish with Noel and I was lucky to be one of those. But this was always on the basis that Lois was able to stay with her daughter or somewhere else while Noel was away. Apart from those few weeks each year, Noel simply gave up the life of fly fishing that he had known. He thought that this was only fair, as Lois had supported him while he was off fishing and having a great time while she was holding up her end with the shop and the Post Office and the bank. Now it was Noel's turn to support Lois. Moving away from Cressy was a great loss to Noel, because he loved the weirs and Brumbys and everything that went with it.

I thought I might make some general observations about Noel's fishing.

For many years Noel fished wet. He fished any way that was needed to catch a fish. He fished at night, and in fact from 1970 to 1974 he fished the Brumbys Creek weirs five or six nights a week, from about nine o'clock at night until about two o'clock the next morning. There is no doubt he caught a hell of a lot of fish. He fished during the night hours because during the day he was shearing or doing other things to earn his living.

By the time I got to know Noel in 1981 he was only interested in polaroiding, and in fishing to tailing fish and to fish that were rising. And he would polaroid into the dark. Noel was brilliant at spotting fish – he would spot a fish in a raindrop. I can remember in the early day polaroiding Little Pine Lagoon at 5 o'clock in the afternoon with almost no light left. And Noel would say, "There's one!" even though I couldn't see them if I was walking on top of them.

His casting was brilliant in its accuracy, and his line management was incredible. In all the years I fished with him I can only ever recall seeing him muck up one presentation. It was in his later years, on Lake Echo, when he got his line tangled around his walking stick, which he used because his ankles were shot and he had bad arthritis by that stage. I had never seen him display any bad temper, but on this occasion he threw his walking stick way up into the bush. It made me realise that his line management wasn't something that came natural to him, but something that he had worked really hard at over many years. So when he mucked it up, he was not at all happy.

Flies. The last time I fished with Noel was at Lake Big Jim in the 2006/07 season. There was a reasonable dun hatch and I caught 10 or 12 fish - all on a small dun emerger. Initially Noel wasn't going to fish at all. He said, "I'm past it mate. I'm stuffed, I can't fish."

When I got back he said to me, "Well, how did you go?" and I said, "I got about 12". He asked, "What did you get them on?" and I said, "On a little emerger. So how did you go Noel?" "Oh," he said, "I got nine." "What did you get yours on Noel?" "I got one on a Red Tag, one of a Royal Coachman, one on a Royal Wulff, one on a Black Spinner, one on an Orange Quill, one on a Nobby Hopper, ... I just want you to know mate, it doesn't matter what you fish." He had told me that so many times, but he still wanted to demonstrate it to me. He

did that sort of thing repeatedly – he didn't care what he had on the end of his line. He usually tied on a Red Tag, but it didn't really matter what he put on – he still caught fish with it.

In regard to fly tying, Noel would say there is nothing new in fly tying. None of the patterns are new – everything has been done before. It is only the materials that are new, and that's all that makes the difference. There might be some new designs, like Stimulators or some of the foam flies that are a bit different, but the basic techniques have been known for years. And so many flies that Noel tied over the years that have just disappeared. I would never know about them, and others would never know about them either. By way of example, I received an email the other day which included a photograph of a fly. The writer said that Ken Orr was having great success with it. It was a fly that had been tied by Noel, and the writer wanted to know the name of it. Now I was certain that I had seen every fly Noel had ever tied, but I'd never seen this particular fly before in my life. Now Noel used to tie specific patterns to fulfil orders, but he would often just grab some materials and construct a fly from what he had in front of him. If it floated well he would go out and catch a fish on it. He would put it in front of a fish and the fish would eat it.

Rods and leaders. Noel hated stiff rods. He absolutely hated those new modern Sage rods. "They're great for casting mate, but not for fishing." He loved soft rods and he loved his little Winston three weight, which he fished with all the time. He fished a 7'3" three weight, and that was his rod and that's all he fished with for the last 5 or 6 years. As for leaders – he liked a very dull nylon, and he greased his leader all the way from the fly line right up to the fly. His aim, of course, was always to put the fly in front of the fish with the leader away from the fish. Now I couldn't always do this, but he always could. I only ever saw him fish once with two flies on his leader, and that was at Pedder. He said, "I hate this mate. I'm going to take one of these flies off."

He loved his Horne waders; they were the only waders that he ever wore. We fished in some of the slipperiest rivers imaginable, and I never saw him slip or fall. All he ever wore were his Horne waders or his gum boots. The only time I believe he ever fell in was at Creely Bay at Arthur's. Because of his hatred of snakes he was walking out on the logs that used to be in Creely Bay, but there was a snake on a log, so in he went – anything to get away from the snake. Otherwise he never lost balance. The upper reaches of the Liffey were like glass, but it was no problem to Noel.

Barry Lodge was a great mate of Noel's. Barry tied lots of flies for Noel's shop, and when Barry's wife died he spent a lot of time at Noel's place. They were very close friends. Then Barry's house on the St Paul's River was burnt down and all of his fishing and fly tying gear was destroyed. A lot of Noel's clients donated rods and reels and other equipment, and Noel put together a collection of fly tying gear for Barry that you couldn't jump over, and this got Barry back into fly tying again. This sort of kindness was so very typical of Noel.

In 2004 he was recognised in the Tasmanian Hall of Fame. I went to his induction ceremony, which was a very nice recognition of him. The Hall of Fame Museum is at the Salmon Ponds at Plenty. Noel recently donated his old Phantom motorbike to the Museum, and it should be there shortly for people to see. He stands, and deservedly, in some very good company in that museum, with other great anglers who have been admitted to the Hall of Fame.

And that brings me to the end of my reflections on the life of Noel Jetson.

# President's Message

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I think everybody who attended the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner in August 2007 will have happy memories of the evening. The release of *Geehi to Great Lake: An Anthology of Victoria Fly-Fishers' Association Newsletters* was the highlight of the night, and something the VFFA can be proud of. At the time of publication, it was always intended to publish a 'follow on' history of the VFFA. This history, *The Country For An Angler: A History of the Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association* will be released at the August Annual Dinner.

We have been very fortunate to have past President and Honorary Life Member Dr Tony Brothers undertake the writing of this history. The author has sourced earlier published accounts and a great deal of archival material. In addition we have been fortunate to have another VFFA member, Rick Keam, provide editorial guidance and contribute to the early chapters of the book. Please take the time to read Rick's article in this newsletter, 'The VFFA History', which is a brief glimpse of the book.



Invitations to the Annual Dinner are included in this newsletter. Please get on board, bring along a guest, and let's make it a big night of celebration at the Kelvin Club.

The book order forms are also included in this newsletter, as well as publishing details of the standard and limited editions available for sale.

This time last year I was in the Kimberley and missed both the Dinner with Partners and Cane Day, which have become part of our June Calendar of events in recent years.

The Dinner with Partners was a good opportunity to meet up with our members' better halves and I am sure the ladies enjoyed meeting up with the group as well as the Kelvin Club experience.

It was also good to be able to get along to Cane Day. I know from personal experience that it was a Cane Day a few years ago which hooked me onto cane, and I have subsequently become an enthusiast. Having said that, we did reflect on how much gear we have today - rods, reels, etc, suitable for different water and conditions. One of the fellows commented that his old uncle had one rod, one reel, and caught plenty of fish in a variety of fishing conditions. We probably do not need the array of gear many of us have today. On the other hand, being a gear freak is one of the delights of fly fishing.

Glenn Eggleton gave a very entertaining talk on Noel Jetson at the June General Meeting. In the absence of his planned DVD, in Glenn's words, he 'had to work a bit harder'. He talked anecdotally about Noel, and it added to our knowledge of Noel and the fisherman he was. A number of members who were guided by Noel spoke highly of their experiences, and it was one I wished I had been able to experience.

The Bullen Merri Fishing Weekend and Dinner on August 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> is advertised in the newsletter. Never having attended myself, I understand it can be a weekend light on fish,

but a Saturday evening dinner that is outstanding.

Warnambool member Jim Blakeslee is our July Meeting guest speaker. An angler of incredible breadth and experience, he is well qualified to speak on his chosen topic, "Things are changing, so we need to be flexible." If you have not already read it, please read Jim's bio in the newsletter before the meeting. I look forward to meeting up with you for dinner at the Kelvin before the meeting.

Tight lines,

*Peter Boag*

## VFFA Meetings & Activities

### **JULY 2010**

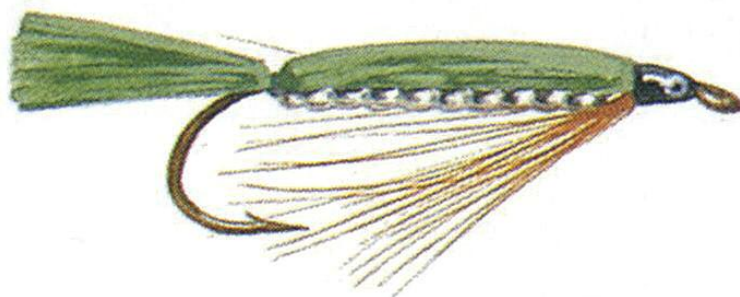
- 4 Sunday Casting
- 11 Sunday Casting
- 15 General Meeting: Speaker – Jim Blakeslee**
- 17 Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Game Dinner
- 18 Sunday Casting
- 21 Council Meeting
- 25 Sunday Casting

### **AUGUST 2010**

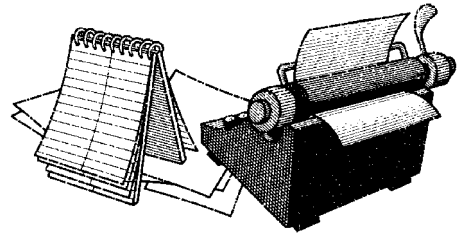
- 1 Sunday Casting
- 7 & 8 Bullen Merri trip
- 8 Sunday Casting
- 15 Sunday Casting
- 18 Council
- 22 Sunday Casting
- 27 Annual Dinner and VFFA History Launch**
- 28 President's Casting Day

### **SEPTEMBER 2010**

- 8 Council Meeting
- 16 VFFA AGM**
- 22 Council Meeting (New Council)



# From the EDITOR'S DESK



I am a keen attender of our monthly meetings, and haven't missed too many in recent times. However I was unable to get to the June meeting to hear Glenn Eggleton's presentation on the life and times of Noel Jetson. Fortunately Colin Morrison very kindly recorded Glenn's talk for me, and this enabled me to transcribe the text for this newsletter.

I must say that I found listening to the recording both captivating and compelling. Noel Jetson clearly led an incredible life, pursuing his passion for fly fishing. His beginnings were humble indeed, but with amazing determination he mastered his craft, eventually becoming a brilliant fly tier and one of our most skilled and respected trout fishing guides. Noel was clearly an easy person to like, admire and respect. Glenn's account reveals a man who was a wonderful friend, generous with his time and skills, and a real visionary in terms of promoting fly fishing in this country. But the years weren't kind. Noel's decision to give it all away to support his wife in her illness is quite breathtaking, and the decline in his own health in recent years is really sad.

I met Noel once, in the late 1970s, on my first trip to Tasmania when I made the mandatory stop at his shop in Cressy. He was exceedingly generous with his help and suggestions, even though I was a customer on a very limited budget acquiring a couple of maps and a few of his superb flies. Many of our members knew Noel well, as clients or customers, and all speak warmly of his company and his skills. He certainly deserves his place in the Tasmania Hall of Fame.

If I missed the meeting, I did manage to get to the Cane Day on the following Sunday. I was a late starter, and when I left Camberwell at 12:30 to drive to the Casting Pools it was bucketing rain. Fortunately, by the time I arrived the skies were still leaden and threatening, but the showers had passed. And the 30 members still there were in top form, and those wooden rods were being well exercised.

Soon after I arrived I came across Malcolm Elms - enjoying his first outing in many months. This was so good to see. Malcolm is deservedly one of our most respected members - a life member, casting coach, skilled fisherman, and a man who has contributed enormously to the VFFA over so many years. But the past 12 months have not been easy for Malcolm, as he confronted some difficult and frustrating health issues. So it was wonderful to see him out and about again, with the cheeky grin in place, and obviously improving in health and delighted to be back in the company of his many VFFA friends. Welcome back Malcolm - we really missed you.

A last minute note from Mick Hall informs us that the final draft of the Inland Waters Classification model (a very important document for our trout fishery) is now available, and all anglers are encouraged to check it on this website: <http://bit.ly/dkX3Jo>. Mick implores us to look it over, as we have only thirty days to make any comment. If we see any necessary changes then these need to be emailed to Anthony Plummer at [Anthony.Plummer@dpi.vic.gov.au](mailto:Anthony.Plummer@dpi.vic.gov.au) ASAP, and Mick would appreciate a copy to him. This Inland Waters Classification initiative deserves our attention, as it will lead to a much improved trout fishery.

*Lyndon Webb*

## July Meeting: Guest Speaker – Jim Blakeslee



*Jim with another fine Hopkins River brown*

Jim will give us a personal perspective on fly-fishing along the lines: “Things are changing, so we need to be flexible”.

He needs little introduction. He has been a VFFA member for many years, and was the guest speaker at one of our annual dinners several years ago. He is also our Western District newsletter correspondent and contributes regular monthly reports on the fishing around the Warrnambool area.

Jim was born in Southern California, USA, and took up fly-fishing when he was 18. His early trout fishing exploits encompassed the rivers and lakes of California, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and Oregon.

In 1972 he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California, majoring in Biological Sciences. He trained as a teacher, and in 1973 taught in Guam in the Marianas Islands (a US territory), where he fished for trevally, bone fish and permit. In 1976 he came to Australia and was appointed to Warrnambool High School as a biology/science teacher. He quickly became very familiar with the local trout fishery, and his fly-fishing challenges extended to night fishing for estuary perch, bream and mulloway. He also explored the trouting possibilities in Tasmania, the Victorian Alps and the Snowy Mountains.

In 1981 he took a year’s leave for a round the world trip, and along the way fished in Malaysia, Nepal, the UK, and Nova Scotia in Canada. In 2001 he headed to the Northern Territory and West Australia, where he fished for barramundi, saratoga, mulloway, snapper and tailor. He continues to visit Tasmania and New Zealand each season, and often heads back to California to visit his family and fish some of his home rivers.

Jim is a past president of the Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club, and is now serving his second term as secretary. He is a superb angler who has experienced the most incredible range of fly-fishing opportunities. He is well-qualified to speak on his chosen topic, and we look forward to a very entertaining and informative talk at the July meeting.

### Fly fishing the UK and Europe

Ever thought of doing a trip to the UK or Europe to fish but were worried about where to go and how much it might cost? Now here is an opportunity for any interested VFFA members to enjoy about two weeks of fly fishing in the UK and Europe under the expert guidance of our own Philip Bailey.

Destinations also include Scotland, Slovenia, Italy and Poland.

For more information and a copy of the suggested itinerary contact Dave Long on 0419 369 248 or email [dl.ssv@bigpond.com](mailto:dl.ssv@bigpond.com)

THE COUNTRY FOR AN ANGLER



A HISTORY OF THE  
VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION

R. ANTHONY BROTHERS

# The VFFA History

Tony Brothers' *The Country For An Angler: a History of the Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association*, published by Michael Stevens, is to be released this August at the Association's Annual Dinner.

In 1861, hunter and naturalist Horace Wheelwright declared 'One thing is quite clear—that Victoria is no country for the angler [or] throwing the fly.' Today's fly-fishers can be grateful that he was eventually proved wrong, but only because of the persistence of many people in the face of many setbacks. *The Country For An Angler* is a tribute to their achievement, and the VFFA's important contribution to it.

The book sets the scene by first revisiting the nineteenth century, adding some fascinating new material to earlier published accounts. These include details of the first significant captures of native fish and trout by fly-fishers. The trials and tribulations of the first VFFA of 1906 are illuminated by recently rediscovered newspaper accounts, as are the growth in popularity of trout fishing in the 1920s, and the emergence of the second VFFA during the trough of the Great Depression. Developments in the fishery, developments within the VFFA, and recollections of and by its members, are then presented for each decade to the present day.

The many previously unpublished photographs, some from early glass-plate negatives with stunning image quality, together with paintings and sketches by the great pre-War Australian watercolourist and VFFA member Harold Herbert, ensure that this will be a work to be treasured. A comprehensive high-quality index enables quick location of information on particular topics, events, people and places.

The Publisher, Mike Stevens of Stevens Publishing in Launceston, describes the books as follows:

## ***Standard Edition***

The standard edition will be of 250 plus pages printed in black text, with black and white photos and a small number of coloured photos, on 130 GSM Hanno silk paper, section sewn and hard case bound, round back with head and tail bands, end papers gold foil title and spine with inset image on the front cover.

This will be very similar in appearance to the previous anthology, *Geehi to Great Lake*. It will be different in colour however. This book will have the same Wibalin cloth, but in forest green.

## ***Limited Edition***

This edition will be limited to 100 numbered copies. Previous purchasers of *Geehi To Great Lake* will retain their previous number if they order the History. The limited edition will be similar to the standard edition, but on heavier 150 GSM Parilux Dull Cream paper. It will be bound with a premium book-binding material called Rayas, as per *Geehi to Great Lake*, but in burgundy colour. Due to the heavier paper these books will be thicker than the standard edition. They will also have an inset image on the front cover.

The Number 1 copy is to be auctioned at the Dinner.

# Reg Simons

Reg Simons, a VFFA member since 1974, sadly passed away in early May of this year. Reg was 81 years old and he died peacefully at his home in MacLeod. In his working life Reg had been involved in the clothing industry, and he rose to be a director of Fairmark Shirts.

He had always been a very keen angler, and originally joined the Greensborough Angling Club in the late 1930s. Reg and his brother Rob took up fly fishing and often fished together. Reg had two other close angling companions – Geoff Snow and Trevor Hawkins. They fished Bostock Reservoir (a favourite of Reg's), the Goulburn, the streams and lakes in the Snowy Mountains, and even managed an occasional trip to New Zealand.

On hearing of Reg's passing, Trevor wrote the following reflection on his memories of many good times with his mate:

## **REG SIMONS**

Good mates are hard to find, and good fishing mates are even harder to find. I can honestly say that I've been fortunate in having three that go right back to when I first started fly fishing in the late 1960's. All three were VFFA members. The first to pass away was my dear friend Geoff Snow, then Athol Brown passed away not so long ago, and most recently and very sadly, Reg Simons.

I first met Reg through Geoff. Those two, along with Rob Simons and another fly-fisher, Brian Blackburn, all grew up together and had a common interest in motorcars and rallying. Before they took up fly fishing, they would head off together on camping and fishing trips throughout Victoria in their VW's, to places such as Mallacoota and Waranga Basin, chasing mainly Bream and Reddies.

I remember the first trip when Reg came along fly-fishing with Geoff and I. We went to fish Malmsbury Reservoir at a time when Victorian dams had water in them. The reservoir was backed up into the weeds at the tail end, where the Coliban River flows in. Early in the season, the fishing with wets used to be quite spectacular to very well-conditioned browns that cruised through the openings and channels amongst the rushes.

At that time, Geoff and I were fishing whopping great "telegraph poles" of rods that needed 7 weight or heavier lines to even begin to bend them, but we fished big wets and we caught a lot of fish. On this particular trip, Geoff and I headed into the water and proceeded to flog and flog and flog. I don't remember if we caught any, but I still remember Reg, standing up to his waist out in the water, in the one spot, for at least an hour. I couldn't work out what he was doing, as I didn't see him cast at all, and every time I looked at him he seemed to be just standing there, staring out across the water. Curiosity finally got the better of me and I waded over to see what he was up to.

"What the hell are you doing Reg"? Or something similar would have been my question, probably using a little more colourful language, as was the way in those days between good mates. His answer back came at the precise moment that he lifted his rod and laid into a fish.

“I’m fishing a Red Tag” was his only response as he played a lovely brown to the net. He then waded casually back to the car to have a coffee, or more likely in those days, a Stones Green Ginger Wine to warm up! His method was simply to cast the fly out onto the water and just wait. I’d never seen it done before and wasn’t to see it again until many years later in Tasmania.

Reg wasn’t a dyed in the wool, never say die fisherman, as was Geoff, but he loved coming away occasionally, and enjoyed every minute of it. The socialising side of a trip was Reg’s favourite part and he did it wonderfully. He loved to cook and cater for those of us who just wanted to fish.

Another trip in the early seventies to Tasmania saw four of us all living out of one of those lift up lid Hi-Ace type vans! I’ll leave it to the members reading this to imagine what the trip was like, early in the season, with four blokes all living out of one of those vans for ten days! The steaks and wine selection were wonderful, if over indulged, but the Deb instant potato, the onions and other reconstituted items that barely passed as food left the interior of the van as a place that only dedicated fishers were prepared to live in for more than one night.

Reg rarely fished later on, as his true love was for the nags. But every year, for many years, we all looked forward to the VFFA Annual Dinner and the after-party back at Reg’s house. We travelled down through Heidelberg in the BMW, with one or more of the group standing up through the sunroof, doing the light brigade charge on the way to those wonderful dinners. After dinner, with all of us back at Reg’s house, we would play pool or poker into the wee hours while Reg acted as ‘mine host’ with nibbles and drinks. It wasn’t often that we made it to the President’s Casting the following day. These were wonderful days. I’ll miss Reg, as I do Geoff and Athol. All true gentlemen.”

*Trevor Hawkins.*

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## The August Dinner

The Victorian Fly-Fishers’ Association 78th Annual Dinner will be held at the Kelvin Club on Friday, August 27, at 6:30 for 7:00 pm.

The Dinner is the Official Launch of the VFFA History:

*The Country For An Angler: A History of the Victorian Fly Fishers’ Association,*  
by Dr Tony Brothers.

The cost is \$60.00 per person (plus drinks), and members intending to attend need to RSVP by Wednesday August 18 to the Honorary Treasurer – Mr Tony Mitchem. An invitation and reply form is included as an insert in this newsletter.



# John Silberberg

In March 2008 Colin Morrison and David Grisold had the great pleasure of visiting John Silberberg and presenting him with his VFFA 50 year Membership Certificate. Sadly, John passed away a few weeks ago, on June 25, at age 88.

John was training as an engineer in the late 1930s when war broke. He promptly enlisted in the RAAF, was transferred to Britain, and served as an officer in an RAF bomber squadron. Following the war he returned to Australia, completed his training as a Mechanical Engineer, and set up a factory which specialised in heat treating and case hardening of metals. Much of the work involved the production of components for the motor industry.

At his funeral his daughter Sue gave the Eulogy, and the following extracts from this family tribute give us a picture of John Silberberg:

“I have in my possession a letter from dad’s Uncle Geoffrey, written to my grandmother when he, and both her sons, Dad and his brother Frank had enlisted. It speaks of dad’s personality and how he would emotionally cope with the strains of the air force, but also of a family where there was an expectation of community service and doing what you can for others. This sense of justice was tested years later when he was asked to make armaments for the Vietnam War, a war he considered unjust. He was proud of his supposed ASIO file, a result of his refusal to participate.

His sense of community responsibility extended to the staff at his factory. I remember him organising to take young underprivileged employees to the dentist and of helping them develop their literacy levels. As a result he had loyal staff, many of whom stayed for years and kept in touch after he retired. Recently I had a phone call from one, who wanted to stress to me how my father’s encouragement and support of her children’s education had led to their successful academic and professional careers.

Dad was the most practical person I knew, and I grew up in a house where there was never a tradesman called. My father could fix anything. Dad was also happy to help others, particularly if it involved the use of his chain saw, which he scarily went on using even after being diagnosed with Parkinson’s.

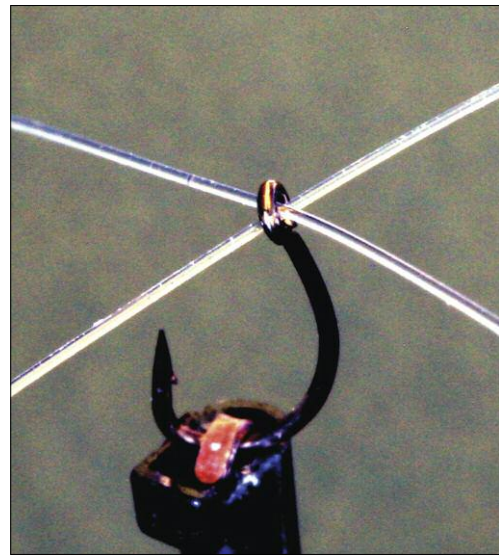
As many of you know, my father had a great love of fly fishing and he always said that he wanted his ashes sprinkled from an aircraft over the Howqua River. This is a gentleman’s activity suited to his personality. I was never sure if, for him, it was a sport, or spiritual activity or a craft. Hours were spent making tiny flies out of feathers and silk, and periodically I would be brought strange presents such as horrible yellow nail polish, which it would then transpire were actually for some exotic fly. Every March long weekend until they got too frail, he and his great friend Noel Sheppard Clark would go away for a 10 day fishing trip. The organisation of these fishing trips was done with military precision - they knew how many wine glasses, bottles of beer and wine were required, and occasionally the odd trout would be brought home. I don’t believe that the fishing was as much about the catch as about the environment and tranquillity of the place.”

Sue affirmed that her father loved his involvement with the VFFA, and the Annual Dinner was a much-anticipated event in his diary. Thank you Sue, for these glimpses of your father's life.

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## Palomar Knot (Again)

The May issue featured the Palomar Knot, which is easy to tie and very strong. Mick Hall uses and strongly recommends it to tie flies to fluorocarbon leaders. The diagrams of this knot in the various textbooks show the leader line being doubled over on itself and then this double thickness of line being pushed through the eye of the hook. Mick has written to point out that it is much simpler to thread the single thickness of line through the eye, then turn it around and pass it back through the eye again in the opposite direction to create the loop under the eye. Mick has sent a photo showing that he could easily thread some 0.22 mm (7 pound) line twice through the eye of a size 18 Mustad C49s hook.



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## VFFA Dinner with Partners

(Report provided by Colin Morrison)

June 10 was a very cold night, but 12 couples braved the weather and gathered at the Kelvin Club for the VFFA's annual Dinner with Partners. It was a pleasure to welcome David and Kerrin Martin, who had travelled down from Ballarat to join us for what proved to be very pleasant evening.

This year we reverted to the single long dinner table setting, with male partners moving several places around the table at intervals to meet and talk with some of the other partners.

The meal was again the very high standard Kelvin Club fare that we have come to enjoy, and it was topped off with coffee and chocolates, compliments of David Grisold and Chocolatier. The ladies present also received a small box of chocolates, again courtesy of David. Our president, Peter Boag, hosted the evening and donated the drinks.

Our special thanks to Peter and David for the generosity, which contributed the success of this very delightful occasion.

## Alf Wark's Holiday

In the Christmas/New Year holiday period of 1931/32, Alfred Wark's friend Kevin Molphy of Heyfield, whose family ran cattle up on the high plains, invited him on a packhorse trip to the area below Mt Howitt. After what was obviously a memorable Christmas Day in the company of large country families of the era, the group set out on Boxing Day. In all, they would cover 270 miles. Between brumby-catching and other activities, they augmented their diet with fishing and hunting. Alf's record of the journey, some photographs of which are included in Tony Brothers' coming VFFA history, summarises it as: 'OH! WHAT A TRIP!!!'

The trip diary entries are in pencil, probably because ink might have been destroyed by rain, and were written in a light hand. Some sections are now very faint, and transcribing even the clearer material has required a magnifying glass. However, despite the illegibles, the general narrative is always clear.

### **24/12/31**

Left Melb 4:15, arrived Heyfield 10:30.

### **25/12/31**

Brekkie in bed. Chas at Weir. Fr Mac [possum?] yarn funny as Tivoli—P. O'Brien [illegible] SOME DINNER—Swing Bridge for lawn and tennis court—All Cowarr at O'Brien's after tea—30 O'Briens—Norie Rice—Isa Boyd—Eileen O'Brien\*—Patty &c. Home 1:30.

*\*Later to marry Kevin Molphy*

### **26/12/31 (32 miles)**

Left 11:30. [Illegible] Higgins and all the event send-off. Lunch at Macalister bridge—[illegible] arriving 3:30. Called McKay's for beers and had half a dozen—then up to Garvie's above Licola. McKay's [illegible] and Alex called up. Hard access—rode 32 miles for day—not too bad—stiff bums not rubbed. About 95° and hot on the cuttings—dusty—Charlie Howlett poor [illegible]—my mount Phyllis a beauty.

### **27/12/31 (27 miles)**

Up 5:30 am. Left P. Garvie's at 9 am. Called McKay twins and struck Macalister River then the Wellington which we crossed 32 times—after last crossing 7 mile climb to the plains—panoramas of Wellington and Crinoline wonderful—hard on the horses up the big spur—variety of timber country—thick scrub to the ash then snow gum country. Higgins Plain 800 acres of clear with the Caledonian Creek thru it. I had a swim and saw no fish in it. Saw one fish rise in Wellington.

### **Sunday**

Lost my hat on the way up—day very hot too! Feed and yarn—Chas very interesting on cattle and wild horse stories—Then ghost yarns in dark—'Wild Ned' and dingo—Jack with wind up—Heard dingo howl. Wonderful sleep—10:30 p.m. until 9:30 a.m.

Excerpts from [illegible author]'s "Wild Dogs' [Glory?]"—Stockmen's Hell":

"Land of Deep Thinkers in the Plain

Land of the Laughing Ghost"

“What are my loves: my friends,  
my church, my tavern and my  
only wealth—these plains”\*

*\* It has not been possible to identify the source of the first two lines, but the search power of Google reveals that the last three are a reworking of Richard Le Gallienne, a late 19<sup>th</sup> century/early 20<sup>th</sup> century poet who wrote a well-regarded introduction to an edition of The Compleat Angler. Le Gallienne’s poem ‘My Books’ described his collection as ‘My friends, my loves, /My church, my tavern, and my only wealth...’. Alf adapted its sentiments to capture the bond between high plains and high plainsmen.*

*Le Gallienne is also noted for saying “A critic is a man who knows the way but can’t drive the car.”*

### **Monday (16 miles)**

Slept in till 9:30. Fooled around till 1 pm. Saddled up for [illegible] road along Holmes Plain—wild horses and cattle grazing on plain. Trip to top over plain of 1000s of acres—great views from the top—towards Tamboritha and Crinoline one way—then to Wellington the other way. Good ride home. Chased the unbroken horses on the plain—full gallop. Big tea of wild pigeon and bed 9:30.

### **Tuesday (28 miles)**

Up at 6 am and after a hard ride got the horses yarded—started with light packs at 9:15. Up over Holmes Plain and Gorge and “Racecourse” to Lookout Plain then Bryces. Trouble with slipping packsaddles. Very steep drop from Bryces to the Dry Creek bed, 3000’ in 2 miles. Walk down and lead horses. Canter along the flat and arrived Wonnangatta Station at 6:30. [Illegible] yarn re wild horses and cattle & the murder mystery.

Yard full of wild horses to be [illegible], some from tomorrow.

Hands at Wonnangatta: Jack Bryce, Bob Elliott, Arthur Nicholls, “Nugget”, “Jack”.

Bed on verandah—slept like a top. Big fires on the hills. The flowers on the plains defy description in variety and colour.

### **Wednesday (6 miles)**

Wonnangatta Station all day.

Up 9 am and then to horse yards where brumby was put in a crush—did he buck—then mouthed with a bridle—roan mare the next—easy and quiet—after dinner the bay brumby tied—performed to some order for 2 hrs—Jack M[olphy] & Jack C[larke] & self blackfishing about 20 1–3 lb—bed early after the most interesting yarn—and demo of damper making by Jack Bryce.

Rode 6 miles for worms.

[Notes on facing page] Mr Bob Elliott, Wonnangatta Station, Talbotville

45 South Cres., Northcote

Clive Lester, Wonnangatta, 30/- for dingo skins\*

*\*James Wark advises that 'When [Dad] and I first went up there together he got a tanned skin for me from the then dingo trapper, and he discussed how he used them to make his trout flies back in the late 1920s and early 30s.'*

### **Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> Dec.**

A loaf at station all day again—up at 9:30—had a washing day and clean-up.

The brumby Big Boy in the yards—with Chas on the leg tackle—Black horse saddled and like a lamb. Blackfishing 5:00–8 abt 10 of 1 lb average. Chas 2 duck. Lester arrived with Bob's son—B.F.B.\*—yarned till 1 am. All the larks round the country with J. Clarke—then beds.

*\*Most likely 'Bloody Funny Bloke'!*

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## **ATF Report**

(provided by Mick Hall)

### ***Trout Anglers unite to help save a highly endangered native fish species that is only found in the Marysville area.***

Saturday June 19 saw a collection of zealous trout anglers working side by side with scientists from DSE, the Arthur Rylah Institute and the Murray Darling Basin Authority to reconstruct the bushfire affected area around Leary's Creek, which runs through Marysville. One of Australia's most endangered and Victoria's only endemic freshwater fish got a boost when the Victorian Government joined with Australian Trout Foundation members and Marysville Youth Incorporated to restore a creek affected by the 2009 bushfires.

Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) Fish Ecologist Fern Hames said the aim of the Native Revegetation Planting Day was to assist the population of Barred Galaxias (*Galaxias fuscus*) in Leary's Creek next to Gallipoli Oval in Marysville.



*Men and women at work*

“The 2009 bushfires removed a lot of the vegetation around the creek, reducing water quality by allowing more silt and ash into the creek and removing important habitat and food sources for the rare fish,” Ms Hames said. “The Victorian Government acted in the aftermath of the fires to protect the remaining Barred Galaxias by funding the capture of hundreds of fish at 8 sites and moving them to DSE's Arthur Rylah Institute research aquarium at Heidelberg. We know there are still some Barred Galaxias in Leary's Creek but we needed this type of revegetation work to help it recover sufficiently to support the return of the fish we removed more than a year ago.

This recovery action has been vital for the survival of this already rare species because 90 per cent of its known habitat has been affected by either the 2006 or the 2009 bushfires. The fires also damaged the trout barrier in Leary's Creek, but this has since been repaired. The barrier stops predators from moving into the section of Leary's Creek used by the Barred Galaxias and having an impact on this rare fish. The Barred Galaxias is known from only 12 key small population's world-wide, and all of these populations are from a small area of Victoria which we are working to protect. We are grateful for the strong support of the Australian Trout Foundation in recovery actions for Barred Galaxias, including the revegetation day at Marysville."



*The predator barrier*



*Lunch*

Over thirty people turned up to plant trees along the creek course, and with so many hands it was light work. The entire project was completed within two to three hours. After a light barbecue lunch our day was complete.

The Australian Trout Foundation is committed to assist wherever possible to maintain the viability of our Native fish species, and we hope that this small yet significant project is the first of many. We would also like to congratulate the members of DSE, MDBA, and Arthur Rylah Institute who have gone out of their way to work side by side with the ATF; it truly is a great sign for the future.

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## Magnets On Your Vest

Milton Zeuschner at Hookup tackle shop was recently showing your editor some new clip-on 'zingers' that had a fairly strong circular magnet in their centres. The idea is that when you are changing flies, you can drop your flies onto the magnet where they will be held until you are ready to either tie them on or put them back in your fly box. The zinger is useful, but if you already have enough of these, then a good strong but small-sized magnet attached somewhere on your vest may avoid the dreaded 'fly dropped into the thick grass' syndrome.

# SOME FAMOUS FISHING WRITERS

MAJOR THE RT. HON. JOHN WALLER HILLS, P.C., M.P.

(1867-1938)

J. W. Hills is best known in the angling world for his delightful book *A Summer on the Test*, published in 1924. Such was his enthusiasm for this lovely river that those unacquainted with his other books may have assumed that all his spare time was occupied in chalk-stream fishing. But in fact, there can have been few men who have enjoyed such a widely-varied sporting career as Hills. Fishing for salmon, trout and dorado, hunting, shooting, stalking and coursing all came within his orbit. Such sports took him not only all over the British Isles but also to Canada, the U.S.A., Uruguay, Paraguay and Norway. Many of these experiences are described in his book *My Sporting Life*, which is not nearly as well known as it deserves to be.

Hills was born in 1867 and was educated at Eton and Balliol, afterwards going to London to study law. He then became an active solicitor until 1906, when largely owing to the influence of Joseph Chamberlain, he was drawn into politics, becoming M.P. for Durham in that year. He served in the first world war, attaining the rank of Major, and from 1925 until his death represented the Ripon division of Yorkshire.

He caught his first trout at the age of eight, in a tributary of the Somerset and Gloucestershire Avon, and began his salmon-fishing career in 1889, when his father took a lease of Corby Castle, which included a six-mile stretch of the Eden. Here he killed many salmon, besides making some fine baskets of trout with the wet fly and “creeper”, as the nymph of the Large Stone fly is called in the north. During this period he learned to dress salmon flies, but for some obscure reason he never tied his own trout flies.

On the appearance of Halford’s first book, *Floating Flies and How to Dress Them*, he became an ardent convert to the dry fly. In 1890 he caught his first chalk-stream trout on the Whitchurch Club water of the Test. In 1893 and 1894 he and a few friends made a trip to Norway for salmon fishing, and he also fished many Scottish lochs at this period.

In 1902 the lease of Corby Castle came to an end, and his father bought Highead Castle, on a small river called the Irve. Here, as well as on many adjacent Yorkshire rivers, he continued to fish for trout. But the lure of the dry fly was beginning to draw him southwards; first to the Kennet at Hungerford and then to the Ramsbury stretch of the same river, which he rented in 1902.

The year 1907-08 found him at St. Cross on the Itchen, but here he met with little success as the water at that time was suffering from tar pollution. He also fished the Abbots Barton water, as the guest of Skues. Then came *Minor Tactics of the Chalk Stream*, and he became as keen a disciple of Skues as he had formerly been of Halford, thereafter fishing the floating or sunk fly as the occasion seemed to demand.

The war then interrupted his fishing career until 1919, when for three seasons he fished the Driffield Beck, the well-known Yorkshire chalk stream, which he confessed he found very difficult water. In 1924 he took a rod at Mottisfont, on the Test, and from 1925 until 1929 he was a member of the Houghton Club, which he continued to visit in later years as a guest.

In addition to the two books previously mentioned, Hills wrote *A History of Fly-fishing for Trout* (1921), a most erudite and valuable exposition of the subject; *The Golden River: Sport and Travel in Paraguay* (1922); *The Dorado* (1932); and *River Keeper* (1934), a biography of the famous Houghton Club keeper, William Lunn. He became President of the Flyfishers' Club in 1925, and his photograph in the club Journal shows a lean, intellectual face of considerable character. He was a most popular man with a wide circle of friends.

Hills was a Privy Councillor and was to have been created a baronet in the New Year Honours' list of 1939, but as he died in the previous December, the unusual, if not unique, step was taken of conferring the baronetcy on his five-year-old son (he had married very late in life). And his widow was granted the style, precedence and other privileges of a baronet's widow – a well-deserved tribute to a very able man.

(Written by C. F. Walker, and notes provided by Andrew Braithwaite)

## Tasmania Trip – February 2010



We have booked Hayes on Brumbys at Cressy from Saturday February 19 to Friday February 25 next year. Bed, breakfast and linen, including a towel, will be provided. The VFFA will arrange dinner and drinks. Members are asked to book their own travel to and from Tasmania, make their car arrangements and look after their lunch requirements.

Peter Hayes and his guides will be available to take us out on the rivers, lakes and weirs of our choice at special rates. If you wish to join the group contact Hamish Hughes on 9822 6811.

# Cane On The Brain

(Report from Dermot O'Brien)

Well, the Cane Day has come and gone again and this year it was certainly a day for oil skins, heavy woollen jumpers and hats. Frankly, I think most enjoyed dusting off the waterproof clobber. Despite the bitterly cold day and passing showers, the enthusiasm for our VFFA Cane Day at Yarra Bend Park Fairfield was not dampened. This year was the seventh for this unique event.



The day did get off to a slow start, but before long about 60 hardy fly fishermen had forgotten the weather and were immersed in discussion on all things cane. Rods by Peter McKean and Nick Taransky were well represented, as usual, but there were rods by other makers too, including rods from craftsmen in Alaska and France.

Discussion ranged from action, line-weight, and finish to availability and much more. It seems that over recent years knowledge on and interest in cane rods continues to increase, a true renaissance.

There is no shortage of VFFA members who now fish split cane rods. There is something special about fishing with a beautiful rod that took 50 or 60 hours of a craftsman's time.

Peter McKean made the trip from Launceston and was there to answer questions about his terrific rods. Unfortunately, Nick Taransky and Brad Waggoner could not make it this year. Let's hope they can in 2011.

VFFA President Peter Boag had just taken delivery of a new Taransky and was enjoying both how it performed and showing it off. Peter says his new Taransky Driggs River 4/5wt 7ft was well worth the wait.



Writing in the *Flyfisher* Magazine recently, Nick Taransky says his Driggs River is a classic taper, originally developed by the legendary rod maker Paul H. Young.

When the sun managed to poke through, the edge of the pool was instantly crowded and it was just a blur of swishing cane. Rod comparisons were inevitable, as was how they matched up with reels and lines.















