

FLY LINES



JULY 2017

July Meeting with Daniel Hackett

Please note - our July meeting is another lunchtime meeting, with special guest Daniel Hackett.

Daniel is a well-known Tasmanian fly fishing guide based in Launceston. His guiding business, RiverFly 1864, has grown to become one of Tasmania's most respected fly fishing operations. It was a Tasmanian Tourism Gold Medal Winner in 2016 (a first for the Australian fly fishing industry), and was awarded the industry's top accolade, the Qantas Australian Tourism Award, in February 2017. It now includes the RiverFly Wilderness Huts, which are located in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and thus enabling the guiding team to offer sight-fishing on the famed Western Lakes.

Thursday, July 20,
12:00 Noon at the
Celtic Club

Daniel last spoke at a VFFA meeting back in 2008, when he described how he expected the Tasmanian trout fishery to change because of climate change and the more frequent droughts. Most of his predictions came true, so at our July meeting he will revisit this theme, calling it 'The Tasmanian Trout Fishery Version 2.0'.

For the many of us who fish Tasmania, and all who have an interest in our changing Australian trout fishery, this will be a fascinating presentation.



So come along and hear Daniel at the Celtic Club, 12 noon, on Thursday July 20.

All members are welcome to join us for lunch, but bookings are essential as lunch will be eaten during the meeting. Please make a booking before 12 noon on Wednesday, July 19, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.

THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 65 NO.9 – JULY 2017

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

info@vffa.org.au **www.vffa.org.au**

President

Mike Jarvis

Email: president@vffa.org.au

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.org.au

Honorary Secretary

Kevin Finn

Email: secretary@vffa.org.au

Honorary Editor

Lyndon Webb

Email: editor@vffa.org.au

VFFA Website Administrator

Kevin Finn

Email: webadmin@vffa.org.au

Honorary Librarian

Rick Dugina

Email: library@vffa.org.au

Other Council members:

Senior Vice President: John Permewan

Councillors: Alex Evans

David Grisold

Dermot O'Brien

John Pilkington

Jason Platts

Terry Rogers

Ian Sambell

Hamish Hughes (Immediate Past President)

All material copyright © all rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent of the publisher. Published monthly by The Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Inc., PO Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Index

| | | | |
|--|----|--|----|
| VFFA Office Holders | 2 | Warrnambool Fly Fishers' 2017 Dinner | 24 |
| New Member..... | 3 | Some Important Events | 24 |
| President's Message | 4 | Western Lakes' Challenge 2017 | 26 |
| The August Annual Dinner - Greg French | 6 | Candy Cane | 29 |
| Help Wanted! - Tree Planting | 8 | This Month's Yarn | 32 |
| Editor's Desk – Lyndon Webb | 10 | Flying Blind On The West Coast | 35 |
| One Man's Personal Fly Fishing Journey..... | 13 | Fly of the Month | 37 |
| Vale Tony Johns | 21 | Web Fish | 38 |
| Vale Ron Millott..... | 22 | VFFA Meetings & Activities | 40 |
| Fly Fishing Art - Lyn Smith | 23 | | |

A New Member

It is our pleasure this month to welcome John Trioli back as a member of the VFFA. We trust that his membership brings many pleasant experiences and memories for him. John - a very warm welcome to the ranks of the Association.



*Tichborne
watercolour -
Ahuriri River*

President's Message

June, the start of winter, the rivers are closed, the days are short and cold, so nothing much happening on the fly fishing calendar, right? Well, actually, wrong! This year, June has been quite busy and very special.

Let's start with our June guest speaker, Bernard Holbery, well known to us as a frequent contributor to *Fly Lines*, and a highly skilled angler renowned for his knowledge of the rivers around Buxton and Taggerty. Well, now, after a passionate presentation to a large VFFA audience, he also rates as one of our more memorable speakers. Despite professing to me his nervousness before I introduced him, Bernard quickly had the undivided attention of the audience. You could have heard a pin drop in the room as he told a very personal and at times emotive story of his journey through life as a fly fisher. It was quite special and will be remembered by everyone for a long time.



David "Feathery" Featherstone to farewell him as he prepares to leave Victoria with his wife Alison for Perth to be closer to family. A Life Member and former President of the VFFA, David is one of our longest-serving members and will be missed by his many friends. Good luck with your move David, although I must say I feel a little concerned for the West Australian trout!



A sad farewell for David 'Feathery' Featherstone

One of the other highlights of the month was the Western Lakes' competition with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers. This year the event was held at Camperdown with the action taking place at Lakes Bullen Merri and Purrumbete, competing for the Bruce Whitehead Trophy. Unfortunately, the VFFA didn't manage to win the trophy in its inaugural year. After sharing the lead overnight we were pipped at the post by a fine brown of close on 4 lb, caught early on the Sunday by Bairnsdale angler Ingomar Matthes. Congratulations Ingomar and Bairnsdale: anyone prepared to get out before daylight in near-freezing conditions deserves to be rewarded.

To add a little more poignancy to the evening, it was my sad but pleasant duty to make a presentation to our old friend



*Presenting the Bruce Whitehead trophy –
a 4 pound brown tipped the scales
Bairnsdale's way*

While I am handing out congratulations, more are due to Hugh Maltby. Hughie took over the organisation of the event this year and did an outstanding job. He managed to attract a dozen VFFA members to compete, organised the accommodation, and handled the eating arrangements, which included a couple of typical Hughie BBQs. On top of that he arranged to get Bruce Whitehead to Camperdown, (courtesy of Bruce's wife Dorothy), to be on hand to present the trophy to Bairnsdale President Trevor Stow.

Also, a very special thanks to the guys from the Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Club who turned up on the Saturday morning with three boats to take our members out on to Lake Purrumbete. We all appreciated this great gesture and the chance to fish with our Western Victoria friends on a lake they know intimately. All in all, a great event all round, terrific camaraderie and plenty of fish to show for it. Bring on next year.

Next on the agenda came Cane Day, and what a huge success this was. More than 60 people turned up at the Red Tag Pool on a freezing morning that turned into a stunning day. I don't think I have seen so many cane rods assembled in one place. And they weren't there just for show.

Everyone present, it seemed, brought or borrowed a rod to enjoy the pleasure of casting either a modern masterpiece or a piece of angling history. Full marks to David "Choco" Grisold for organising the day and to Hughie for yet another wonderful BBQ. And a big thankyou to everyone who attended and made the event such a resounding success.

During the day I was taken aside by several people who wanted to let me know their feelings about the VFFA dropping Sunday Casting from the winter calendar. I explained that the problem was that over the last couple of years numbers had dropped off to the point where people responsible for organising Sunday Casting had simply decided it wasn't worth the effort. No-one put up their hands to step in, and unfortunately Council was forced to suspend winter casting sessions. Now, as I told several people, if there is sufficient interest, and if there was somebody or bodies, prepared to take on the organisation of the program, then there is no reason why it should not be resurrected. So come on then, someone take up the challenge!

Talking of challenges, I believe the VFFA is facing a major challenge. This one concerns on-going organisation and management, and it appears very clear that we must attract new blood to join the VFFA Council as a matter of urgency. For too long the same hard-working few have handled the administrative side of our Association and that cannot go on for much longer without problems developing. Soon, we will be calling for nominations for office bearers and Council members to be voted on at the AGM in September, and I sincerely hope we have a number of members who might join Council ranks. I would be very keen to hear from anyone who >>>

thinks they might be interested, or who wants more information on what can be a very satisfying role. Please call me for a chat on 0418 265 390 or talk to any other Council member.

That's it from me for this month. Don't forget to put in your diaries the tree planting session on the Rubicon River on

August 6 being handled by Dermot O'Brien, and our July meeting, a luncheon on July 20 at the Celtic Club with renowned Tasmanian guide, Daniel Hackett as our guest speaker. See you there.



The August Annual Dinner - with Greg French



Mark your calendars now to hear Greg speak

This year's Annual Dinner will again be at the Celtic Club, and the date is Friday, August 25. An invitation is included as an insert in this issue.

Our guest speaker for this year's dinner is well-known to most of us. Greg French is an exceptional fly fisher and guide, and a very popular author, speaker, and authority on the Tasmanian Trout Fishery.

He was born in Tasmania in 1962 and is now one of Australia's best known fishing identities. He spends most of his time in Australia and New Zealand, but has fished extensively in South America, North America, the British Isles, Iceland, Eastern Europe, Japan and Mongolia.

Although he starting out as a builder, Greg has spent most of his life in nature-based employment; first as a wilderness guide, then stints as a park ranger in Tasmania's Wild Rivers National Park, and a hatchery officer at the historic Salmon Ponds.

In 1991 he co-wrote with Dr Robert Sloane the Western Lakes Trout Fishery Management Plan for the Government of Tasmania. At about this time he began to concentrate on photojournalism, and continues to write feature articles, reviews and columns for major fishing magazines such as *FlyLife* and *Freshwater Fishing*.

His best known work is his comprehensive guide entitled *Trout Waters of Tasmania*, which has been updated five times since 1984, the last incantation being published by the Australian Fishing Network in 2011.

His first novel, *Frog Call*, was a work of literary non-fiction published by New Holland in 2002. It was well received by critics and readers, and has been reprinted several times. *Artificial*, a companion volume to *Frog Call*, was published by New Holland in 2008 and was also well received.

Menagerie of False Truths, published by Exisle in 2010, was an attempt to explain



Greg is the absolute master at stalking Tasmanian browns

how functional autistics perceive the world around them. It was described by Cameron Woodhead in *The Age* as 'a novel that might, perhaps, rank among such infuriating works of genius as Furphy's *Such is Life* and David Foster's *The Glade Within the Grove*'.

In 2011 Kiwi angler and film-maker Nick Reygaert of Gin-Clear Media commissioned French to co-write and narrate the acclaimed documentary *Hatch*. In 2013, Nick and Greg produced a companion DVD, *Predator*, which was lauded at the Drake Fly Fishing Video Awards and won the Best DVD award at the 2013 IFTD tackle show in Las Vegas.

Greg's last two books, published in 2016, are *The Imperiled Cutthroat* (Patagonia

Books) and *The Last Wild Trout* (Affirm Press). Both have received high praise. (*The Last Wild Trout* was reviewed by Iain Skinner in last month's *Fly Lines* issue).

Greg has indicated that at this year's dinner he plans to talk about how we can maintain our youthful enthusiasm for fly fishing over the years, focusing on the importance of travel and embracing new techniques. He will illustrate his theme with anecdotes and photos from his recent travels to Europe and Greenland.

Greg is a very popular and acclaimed speaker, and we are in for a fabulous night's entertainment on Friday, August 25.

HELP WANTED!

An urgent appeal from Dermot O'Brien.

(The following appeal appeared in last month's (June) issue of *Fly Lines*. This is an important project that in time will benefit VFFA members, and is an opportunity for our association to put something back.)

In recent years the VFFA has been active in lobbying Victorian Fisheries Department managers and catchment management authorities for a better deal for fly fishers locally. Also, we now have representation on the Government's Trout Reference Group and have been active participants in the recent Wild Trout Conference held in Mansfield.

The Victorian Government recognizes the need for healthy waterways and has made a significant investment in riparian protection and improvement projects. The VFFA recently approached the Goulburn Broken Catchment Authority to see how we could help.

We were surprised to learn that no fishing clubs had shown any interest in the streams South of the Goulburn and even including the Goulburn. This catchment includes the Steavenson, Acheron and Rubicon streams, which have been strongly connected with the VFFA for decades and provided enjoyment for so many of our members for so long. Frankly these streams are part of VFFA history.

To that end, the VFFA has agreed to help with a tree planting exercise on the banks of the Rubicon, so we are looking for volunteers.



Healthy rivers need trees. This photo was taken a few years ago when the VFFA assisted in some tree-planting on the Rubicon

The tree planting will take place **Sunday morning, August 6**, just upstream of Tumbling Waters. We are looking for members to pitch in for a couple of hours and then finish with a barbecue lunch.

The work will not be strenuous, and this is an opportunity to chat with catchment management officials and demonstrate our enthusiasm for trout habitat improvement along one of these wonderful streams.



Again from a few years ago – the work crew ready to plant some vitally needed bankside vegetation

This is an important project because streamside vegetation provides critical temperature relief for trout. Drought, bushfires and land clearing practices have left some of our favourite streams exposed and temperatures can vary drastically from water exposed to the sun compared to shaded water. Research indicates that a variance up

to 11 degrees is possible; a life or death difference for trout!

So, your VFFA Council is urging members to pitch-in on Sunday August 6.

Those wishing to help should phone **Dermot on 0412 330 265**



Steavenson River

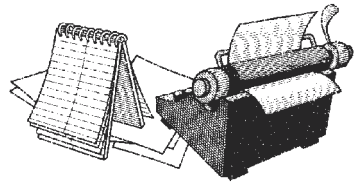


Rubicon River



Acheron River

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"There will be days when the fishing is better than one's most optimistic forecast, others when it is far worse. Either is a gain over just staying home."

(Roderick Haig-Brown)

"The great charm of fly-fishing is that we are always learning." (Theodore Gordon)

"You can observe a lot just by watching."
(Yogi Berra)

I was given a delightful gift a few weeks ago. David Grisold presented me with a large cardboard box filled with old VFFA newsletters, including issues all the way back to the 1950s. I haven't waded through them all yet, but David's contribution, when added to the newsletters I'd previously gathered from other sources, means that I now have close to a complete collection of all the newsletters issued by the VFFA. And what a fabulous compilation of the history and soul of our Association they represent. Thank you David.

One of the benefits of this comprehensive collection of past newsletters is that my supply of McTaggart's has been replenished. I had almost run out, but readers can now be assured that rumours of McTaggart's passing are totally unfounded. In this issue he makes a vigorous reappearance.

My thanks, again, to Philip Weigall, who allows us to pillage his blog on the *FlyStream* site. This time we've reprinted his account of some saltwater fly fishing around Apollo Bay. Philip would remind us that the blog is being constantly updated, so those who are interested in reading the most recent reports on local fishing should check it regularly.

On another newsletter-related matter, for a number of years we have been using in our newsletters those superb watercolours of New Zealand fishing scenes by Nancy Tichborne, one of New Zealand's most accomplished and acclaimed artists. We are very grateful to Nancy for her generosity in allowing us to use her material so freely and without cost. Her magnificent images certainly enhance our newsletters.

I mention this because a Victorian artist, Lyn Smith, has also offered to provide us with material for our newsletter. Lyn was given some fishing flies by Bernard Holbery, and she started sketching them. She has since offered her work to us for inclusion in our newsletters, and readers will find a delightful sketch of the Dr Wark, a well-known local fly, in this issue. And there are more to come.

At a recent Council meeting there was discussion about inviting Matt Tripet, a NSW guide, to speak at a future VFFA meeting. Matt is running a fly fishing program designed to assist men suffering from depression; certainly a current issue of significant importance. Coincidentally I was reading a recent issue of the UK magazine *Trout & Salmon*, and came across an article by contributor Laurence Catlow. Laurence wrote this:

"... I acknowledge that my inability to keep away from the Wharfe (River) had grown out of illness and subsequent recovery; for when depression kept me from my rivers for the best part of three years it was separation from the Wharfe that hurt most deeply, feeling almost like a bereavement. And when the light began to find its way back into my life it was on the banks of the Wharfe that I became a

fisher again; it was there that I found my way back to happiness, and this, I think, was the reason why the Wharfe came to exercise an irresistible sway over my fisher's heart. It was as though piety demanded that ... I should devote myself to the river that had brought me hope and healing."

We would certainly wish Matt every success in his efforts to help those suffering with depression by introducing them to the pastime that we find so fulfilling, rewarding and renewing.

Finally, I must confess that fishing opportunities for me have been a tad scarce in recent months. But a few weeks ago I stumbled on a free Friday, so phoned my fishing colleague of many years, Milton Zeuschner, and invited him to join me. That wasn't hard. Milton has been battling some major medical challenges over recent months, but survived the treatment (which was awful), and is now well on the mend. He hadn't fished for many months, so was an enthusiastic starter.

It was a cold day and we had to sit out a few showers, but the sun appeared occasionally and the wind wasn't too fierce, so conditions were reasonably congenial. We headed to Leongatha to fish a dam that the South Gippsland anglers have stocked over the years. As dams on farms go it's a reasonably attractive fishery, and Milton and I have fished it often. But it hadn't been very productive in recent months, so our expectations were not high. We were going to give it an hour or two, then grab some lunch and head to Western Reservoir, the water supply for Leongatha. The Leongatha Angling Club had stocked 3,000 trout in Western late last year, and recent reports indicated that there were plenty fish in the 1 to 1½ lb range being caught.

We arrived at the dam about mid-morning and parked right beside the water. Milton tackled up and headed off to a favourite corner while I fiddled round sorting out my gear. I had a couple of casts near the car, caught nothing, so trotted along the bank to see how Milton was faring. From a distance I could see his rod hooped over, so assumed he had hooked the bottom. I mean to say, he'd only been there 10 minutes, and the dam had not been fishing well. "Got one?" I asked, half tongue in cheek. "Yep," was the reply, "and he's a good one too." I quickly grabbed the camera as Milton netted a very lively rainbow of just under the 3 lb mark on his scales.



Well done Milton – the first of three, and this was the smallest

I took a couple of photos and then he released the fish. I moved around a bit further to have a cast myself, then dropped my rod and rushed back as Milton had connected to another three pounder. We processed that one too - photo then release. Back to my gear, just in time to be interrupted with another shout from Milton – his third very lively 3 pound rainbow. All this was a fabulous result for a very keen angler who hasn't seen much fishing for over a year.

I finally got a line in the water and on my third cast made contact with what felt like a really solid brown. He rolled and thrashed on the surface twice, then >>>

raced off pulling like a tractor. I had loose line everywhere and made a total foul up of what followed. By the time I got myself sorted, the 'line stretcher' at the other end had given up on me and departed. Oh dear, or words to that effect.

The action had quietened down by then, so with a lull in proceedings we demolished lunch and headed to Western, where of course there were fish aplenty waiting to be caught. It looked good when we arrived, so full of hope and excitement we were soon flogging away. But after a couple of hours of futile casting practice and nothing to show for it, we packed up and left.

A trivial point really, but a reminder to me at least, that fishing is so unpredictable. We had no great expectations of success at the dam, yet it produced the goods. And Western Reservoir, which we'd been assured was firing, gave us nothing. But that's fishing. One of these days I'll have it all worked out, but by then I suspect I'll be too old to fish anyway.

Tight lines, *Lyndon*



CALL FOR ENTRIES AUSTRALIAN FLY FISHERS' ART & CRAFT SHOW

Closing date 31 July 2017



Organised by the
Victorian Fly Fishers'
Association (VFFA)

\$5,000 first prize

Entry information:

www.vffa.org.au/vffa-art-craft-show

Show date: 13-16 September 2017

Steps Gallery, 62 Lygon Street, Carlton Vic



The Australian Trout Foundation had representatives teaching fly tying and fly casting at the recent Melbourne Boat Show. Some VFFA members attended to assist. David Grisold proved a very keen casting tutor, and was more than happy to give Kristina Royter a few pointers.

One Man's Personal Fly Fishing Journey: The June Meeting with Bernard Holbery

At the June meeting some 40 members came along to hear Bernard Holbery talk about his life in fly fishing. A summary of his presentation is given here.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen. My sincere thanks to Mike Jarvis for inviting me to speak to you this evening. I feel very privileged to be here in the company of so many fine anglers.

Let me tell you something of my story. Hopefully it will merge with yours, as some of you are a part of this story and have helped make me the angler that I am today. I would like to dedicate this talk to the late Peter McCabe, to my dear friend Hubert Reichelt, and to David Featherstone, who is soon to venture into a new chapter of his life.

In the early 1900s Sir Edward Grey said: "The time must come to all of us, who live long, when memory is more than prospect. An angler who has reached this stage and reviews the pleasures of life will be grateful and glad that he has been an angler, for he will look back upon days radiant with happiness, peaks of enjoyment that are not less bright because they are lit in memory by the light of the setting sun."

My personal story begins on a beautiful spring morning in Narbethong, when you looked across the paddocks to the Acheron River and saw a haze sitting just above the tall grass. Insects danced in the haze, and swallows darted about gathering supplies for their new nests. Cobwebs sparkled in the morning sun and the tall mountain ash trees released a fragrance that only the mountain areas know.

Spring was well and truly underway in the Acheron Valley and the cold grey months of winter were a memory. I was just a boy playing on the riverbanks,



climbing trees, gathering branches to build treehouses and catching grasshoppers when they were around.

But one day on the Acheron my life changed forever. I was running around a big sweeping bend in the river and was startled to come across a man standing out in the current. I dropped down behind a log to see what he was doing, and was immediately captivated with the graceful loops of fly line sweeping back and forth in the sunlight.

He was dressed rather well for a fisherman, wearing a tie, an old tweed jacket, and a tweed hat that had seen better days. He had a canvas bag over his shoulder and was casting a honey-coloured cane rod with yellow silk bindings. He was working his fly across and down, and I watched for some 20 minutes before he finally hooked a fish. I can still see him lifting the trout from the water, his fingers through its gills. It was a beautifully speckled brown trout of perhaps four pounds. He dropped it into his shoulder bag and went back to

>>>

his repetitive casting, working the fly across and down. It was at that moment that I decided I was going to be a fly fisherman.

I returned to our cabin full of excitement, and that night, lying in bed in the stillness of Narbethong, all I could think about was that magnificent trout being lifted from the water with all its stunning colours. The fisherman – who was he?

There were casting clinics and guiding services available when I was a boy, but my instruction came from the fly fishing books I purchased from second-hand bookshops. My parents bought me books, often as birthday or Christmas presents. I loved reading Frank Sawyer and Skues, Halford, and John Waller Hills. I think I was attracted to these writers because they had so clearly mastered fly fishing, like that man on the Acheron River. I wasn't so familiar with the Australian fly fishing scene as most of my books were from English writers who talked about English conditions.

Unlike many others, I didn't start my journey fishing with worms or spinners. I had discovered an old split cane rod with a salmon fly attached to the leader stored in a shed at Narbethong, and using this primitive equipment I caught my first trout from the Acheron River.

I remember swinging the fly around aggressively, not really knowing what I was doing. But the moment arrived when I accidentally hooked my very first trout. It was a brown of perhaps a pound in weight, caught on an old chewed-up Green Highlander salmon fly. Thus my love of cane rods and wet fly fishing began.

From that early stage in my boyhood all my pocket money was spent purchasing fly fishing equipment. Waders were acquired, along with a plastic fly box and a proper fly rod of about 8 foot length.



Small stream serenity

Frank Sawyer was my hero. His wonderful books taught me about fishing the nymph, while Halford taught me about the dry fly. I started tying my own flies, and was especially proud of my Hereford Brown Nymphs and my Black Angus Duns that were produced using the cattle hair caught on barbed wire fences around Narbethong and Marysville.

Fly fishing became a way of life for me in those early years, and my understanding of the skills involved grew through reading books, spending time on the water, and tying flies at the vice. It was in those formative years that much of my knowledge was gained from fishing the local streams and watching the seasonal changes in the hatches of mayfly and caddis, and the appearance of beetles and hoppers and other terrestrials.

My instructors have always been the rivers - the Acheron, Steavenson, Taggerty, Rubicon, Goulburn and Little River. These all became my special friends, and that love affair continues to this day. My early years were mainly spent fishing the Acheron and Steavenson, though the Taggerty, a bit further away, often saw me too.

My two fishing mates in those days were Louis and Rob, and we spent a lot of time together. Rob used to scare me as he



Jason Platts sharing the stream with Bernard

would often pick up a tiger snake and say, "Have a look at this one Bernie". I'd be fishing some quiet stretch of a stream and would suddenly be distracted by Rob wrestling with a tiger snake. (He later became a professional snake catcher.) He was a top fisherman too, but there's no doubt I felt a whole lot safer when I fished with Louis.

I remember the times we spent dashing through the valley in Louis's old EH Holden. We fished from daybreak to dusk on the rivers, and camping or staying in old huts or sleeping in swags on the river banks. Louis would drive up from Melbourne with his latest fly fishing purchases from Rick Dobson, whose tackle shop then was nestled in the back of Purdy's hardware store at Briar Hill. Rick saw plenty of us, and we enjoyed his King Parrot Creek reports. I often gave Louis a list of items I needed from Rick's store, and Louis then provided some much appreciated front door delivery.

This was a time when the fishing was extraordinary. Lake Eildon was producing some of its best fishing, and all the streams in the valley were firing. Rex

Hunt had his weekly fishing show on the radio, and he inspired us all in so many ways. Louis in particular loved his show, and I remember driving in his cherished EH Holden when the sole topic of conversation was what we'd heard on Rex's most recent fishing show. Rex was very much a part of our early fly fishing years.

A fond memory is of a day spent fishing the Acheron with Rob and Louis in the height of summer. We started fishing at lunchtime in warm but overcast conditions, and Louis soon caught a two pounder on a grasshopper pattern. Rob often wandered off by himself and invariably returned with the biggest fish of the day. In the evenings we would meet together and compare catches. Rob and I would look into Louis's canvas bag to see his fish, then Louis and Rob would peer into mine. But Louis and I rarely needed to look in Rob's bag, because a large fish tail was often sticking out through one side and a fish head out the other.

On this particular summer day Rob and Louis had enjoyed some great fishing, while I had suffered an afternoon I would prefer to forget. But then I caught a fish just before our bag inspections. Louis and Rob stared into my bag at the 5 lb brown trout I'd landed. These were such memorable days.

I had started recording my experiences in a journal or diary, so that I could look back later and be reminded of some wonderful memories. My diaries also helped me understand the seasonal hatches and changes in weather conditions. They were a great reference. Floods, bushfires, the passing of close friends, large trout captures, typical fishing days - all were recorded. I now have eight volumes of diaries, and I lost two others in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires.

>>>

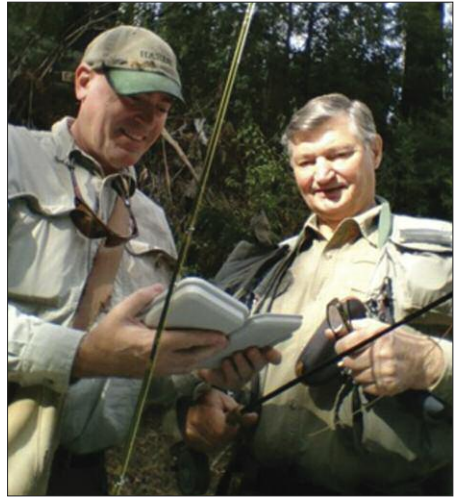
Before coming here tonight I spent some time looking through my diaries and journals. Here is an extract for December 5, 2007.

"I arrived at Buxton at 5:00 am and parked the car beside the Steavenson River. I reached for my Hardy bag and quickly prepared for a day's fishing on a favourite stream. My rod was an Edward Barder cane rod rigged with a silk line, and it wasn't long before I was on the stream as the fog lifted and the sun poked through the tall mountain ash. The day was going to be warm, so I decided to wet wade.

I began casting a size 18 Parachute Adams into all the likely spots, and was soon into a nice Steavenson brown. Today was going to be one of those great days - I could feel it in the air. Nearly every run and pool provided a mixture of rainbows and browns. The fishing was so good that when I reached the Mount Margaret Road turnoff at midday, I stopped for lunch and a quick snooze on the riverbank.

After lunch I continued fishing, with the sun now high and hot. Every time the fly hit the water a fish was on. By late afternoon I was feeling quite weary, so took a swim in a deep pool before tackling the evening rise. Then, nicely refreshed, I was ready for the next phase of the fishing. As the sun disappeared there was a huge snowflake caddis hatch, and the pools were covered with rising fish. Among the many trout I hooked and landed was a 3 lb brown, and the rises continued well into the dark. At 9:30 pm I arrived at the bridge at the Taggerty River junction, a long way from my car.

I was tired and a little sunburnt, so decided to catch a couple of small trout for a meal. I soon had a good fire going, and with the night sky above I cooked the trout on some river rocks. They tasted magnificent. I had a lightweight sleeping



Which fly? Hubert had a suggestion

bag in my backpack, so put some more wood on the fire and was soon sleeping soundly.

I woke the next morning at about 7:30 am. No coffee on hand, but the smell of smoke from the fire and the sound of the running river was a pleasant start to the day. The forecast was for a hot day of 35°C, so I needed to hit the road. My girlfriend Rosa (now my wife), had told me not to bother coming home if I was late for her dad's birthday. Fortunately I had hiked along the road for only a short time when Perry McKenzie, a friend, spotted me and gave me a lift back to my car. I waved him off - and then saw my car keys dangling in the ignition. I had locked myself out!

I needed to be home (Carlton, in Melbourne) by 12 noon for lunch - or else! So I quickly raced to the road to catch the McKenzie's Bus to Melbourne, which came through Buxton at 9:30 am. I saw the bus in the distance rattling towards me, so put my hand out to hail the driver. But he was talking to a passenger and cruised straight past without even seeing me. I was left standing there with a face full of dust.

Now what to do? But good fortune was with me. A logging truck pulled up, the door opened, and I was greeted by two collie dogs named Molly and Jack. The driver asked me where I was heading. "Carlton, in Melbourne." He said he was off to Werribee to drop his load, so would deliver me right to my doorstep. So I sat with Jack and Molly, who licked me to death right through the Black Spur. Stephen, the driver, remains a good friend to this day.

We arrived at Rathdowne Street, Carlton North, and I was home. Stephen pulled up in front of Rosa's house, creating a massive traffic jam of impatient city commuters for a couple of city blocks. Rosa and her father Carlo stood there, stunned to see me leaping out of the logging truck still in my fly vest with my cane rod in my hand. Carlo said: "What the hell is going on?" Rosa simply shook her head and strode back inside, mumbling, "I don't want to know!"

Stephen blew his horn (a tugboat would have been envious) and gave the finger to the bleating traffic behind. I was home. The next day I returned Buxton and picked up my car, all the while reflecting on a truly remarkable day's fishing."

Another very special day was in 2004, a year that I did not miss a morning or evening rise on the Acheron River for the entire season. It was a warm January evening as I made my way down to the Acheron for the evening rise. The best fishing always happened around 7:30 pm, though the bigger fish wouldn't start feeding until right on dark.

On this particular evening I witnessed the biggest caddis hatch I had ever seen. I remember covering my mouth with a handkerchief so I wouldn't swallow bugs. The pools were boiling with rising fish. I remember two young lads coming down from a nearby homestead to watch me fish. They asked me if I would catch



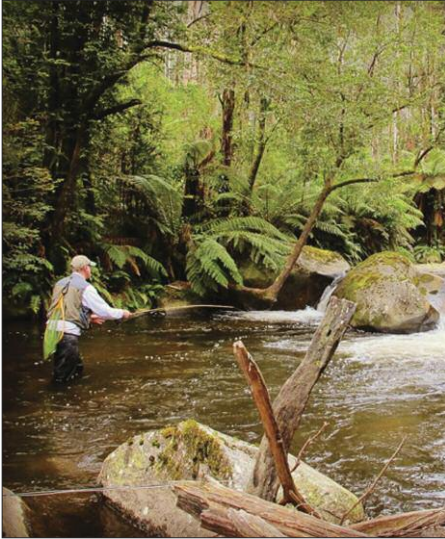
A fish on, and tight conditions too

them a trout each. My first cast connected with a brown of 4¼ lb and the next with a fish just on 3 lb. The two boys were ecstatic, but then a fight broke out over who was to have the bigger fish. After some stern words threatening to take the fish back they settled. My last glimpse was of them racing back to the homestead with one boy holding the three pounder and the other boy holding the larger fish with his brother holding onto it as well.

The amazing thing about this night on the Acheron was that the rise continued right into dark. I stayed on the pool for the entire night because fish just kept rising. I took 12 fish from the pool, all on the Elk Hair Caddis, with my best a brown of just on 5 lb.

Over the years my passion has been fishing the rivers at night - swinging caddis flies, Muddler Minnows, and traditional wet flies around logjams, searching for the larger trout. This is still my favourite and most effective style of fishing, but is only possible because I have come to know the rivers so well during daytime over many years, and thus can navigate them at night without a torch.

Weather conditions are crucial and moonlight nights are ideal for successful fishing. My best captures of large >>>



Mountain stream perfection

fish have happened in darkness around fallen logs. A real highlight of the past few years has been slapping down big Stimulators and Hoppers on end of season evenings.

The Steavenson River along the Buxton to Marysville Road is very special to me, and to many others. Renowned VFFA past president Fred Stewart loved this river, and countless other anglers mention it at some point in their fly fishing journey.

This river is a favourite of mine especially from late October through to Christmas. It can fire in late autumn too. But any day on the Steavenson is enjoyable.

I have always loved the valley in the months of October, November and December, as in these months the weather can be unsettled with increased thunderstorm activity and the resulting termite falls. I have witnessed some wonderful termite falls on the Steavenson. My usual plan of attack is to fish just the biggest pools. And pools that are quiet during the day are often telling

me that there is a big fish in there somewhere. Often he will show himself in a termite fall, and you might then manage to catch him.

I fished the Steavenson one Sunday in October 2011. I arrived, strung my 7'6" 5-weight Peter McKean cane rod, and headed down the farm track to the river. I walked passed Charles on his tractor and he said: "Beautiful day for fishing Bernard." The weather was 25°C but there was a change on the way. Andy, the Mackenzie's bus driver, had come through the Black Spur and had seen huge numbers of termites in the air. So he had given me a call. Sure enough, the Steavenson had clouds of falling termites, and it was only a matter of time before the trout started rising. The river was high and fast and a little discoloured, and my plan was to fish the pools. I tied on a favourite termite pattern, and like clockwork, one hour before dark at around 7:00 pm, fish started rising with gusto. The tails of the pools had five or six fish rising together in harmony.

I picked up several browns to 3 lb, then came across a fish working between a log and some tea tree bushes. My cast needed to be spot-on or I would get snagged. Fortunately it was, and the fish accepted my termite. After an epic struggle a beautiful brown of 5½ lb came to the net. I grabbed a quick photo before releasing him back into the river. I then caught another four, one of which I kept for my lovely wife who often complained that I never took any fish home for her. And I agree with Peter McKean that a 7'6" 5-weight split bamboo rod made up to Jim Payne's 101 taper is the finest trout fishing tool ever devised.

Over the years I have experienced some exceptional seasons of fishing, and some poor ones too. This has a lot to do with the weather, as some seasons have been

in drought, others had high rainfall and the occasional flood. Bushfires have devastated the area on occasions, too.

Increased fishing pressure has made it more difficult than in earlier years. Pesticides and chemicals are washed into the rivers from farms, and housing estates are being built along the banks. All these are changing rivers we once called remote. We all have concerns for the rivers we cherish, and opinions on how the fisheries people should manage the problems. But one thing is certain – the river is what is, and we need to approach it in both sickness and health and fish it to the best of our ability.

The rivers still teem with trout. I recall the day I had with Hubert Reichelt only a few seasons ago. We fished one of the local streams in a hatch and caught several fish, with Hubert landing two thumping browns. But on the day before this same river had been quiet with not a fish to be seen. It's often the hatches, water temperatures, and barometric pressures that determine trout behaviour and how the river will fish.

But when all is said and done, the most vital tool is 'fishing sense'. I am often asked, "Are the rivers fishing well Bernard? I was up there last week and caught nothing." But here was a man who waded in a lowland river with water temperatures in the mid-20s in the height of a hot summer. On that same day, my friend Jason Platts fished the same river up in the headwaters and had one of his best days of the season and water temperatures of 16°C. I quote Robert Traver: "There is no substitute for fishing sense, and if a man doesn't have it, verily he may cast like an angel and still use his creel largely to transport his sandwiches and beer".

I have always had an understanding of the seasons, the seasonal hatches of fly and the months of the terrestrials. That

knowledge is then played out on the stream, whether it be fishing nymphs, dry flies, beetles or hoppers, and knowing their most active times during the day or the night hours. This is necessary for discerning where and how you should fish. Headwaters, lowland creeks, early-morning fishing before a hot day, late evening fishing on a sultry day – all these have their place in the fishing season. So I say to you here tonight - choose wisely.

I must briefly mention tonight some people who have inspired me in my fishing journey. William Alban, who lived on the Steavenson River, was a dry fly purist with a great love of the Whirling Dun dry fly. He was an exceptional angler. He would often see me in the distance fishing the Steavenson in the summer and would leave a cold beer on a fence post with a little note or one of his latest dry fly constructions. It was he who inspired me to tie my own flies.

Norm, who lived in Marysville, was a wonderful angler who I met on the banks of the Steavenson. We spent many years fishing together. His last years were a difficult battle with cancer, and our last trip together was a rafting trip down the Big River where we caught a 6 lb rainbow - I hooked it and Norm got it to the bank. At his funeral his wife passed to me a personal note that was hidden in his fly fishing vest pocket. It included these comments:

"Fishing is my passion and the one person I enjoy fishing with most is Bernard Holbery. Bernie is a great fishing companion to have around because he always tries to bring out the best in you.

We have fished many a summer's day on the streams we love - the Acheron, the Steavenson, the Little River, the Murrundindi and the Toorongo. I remember a day we had on the Steavenson. Bernie and I know this river well, but knowing doesn't >>>



Small stream, but big rewards

always save you. Bernie slipped and went for a dunking. But he is a fisherman through and through, and though soaking wet just kept on fishing. We had a great laugh about it later on.

Springtime fishing can be a bit hit and miss, depending on the temperature. Today was a delightful spring day, though all I could do was dream of what might be, as I was getting ready for work. Then a text message arrived on my phone – a glorious picture of a brown trout Bernie had just caught from the St Patrick's River in Tasmania. When I got to work I got a phone call from Bernie explaining that since 5:00 am he had caught eight rainbows along with this magnificent brown of about 4 lb. When you can't go fishing yourself it is great to hear that your fishing buddy is having a wonderful time on the water.

I find myself fortunate to have met such an amazing fisherman. Bernie is a very generous and caring person, and a fishing buddy of the highest quality."

The best fishermen I have fished with is my good friend Hubert Reichelt. He's a remarkable man, and I have had countless days with him on many Victorian and New Zealand streams. His knowledge of insects and mayfly hatches is extraordinary. He is a first-class fly tier and his Bismarck Nymph and Mataura Spinner are essentials in any fly box. I am very blessed to have Hubert as a fishing friend and there is no doubt that he has contributed to making me a better angler.

My friend Jason Platts is an exceptional angler too. His skills in night fishing are excellent, and he always manages to catch some fish on the most difficult days. His fishing sense is truly remarkable. Some of my most cherished memories have been with Jason on our legendary Eucumbene trips.

Other anglers who have inspired and helped me are Rick Dobson, Rex Hunt, my good mate Donovan from Marysville, and David Cutajar, who I have spent many seasons with in the Tasmanian Highlands. There is no doubt they have all contributed to my angling skills. I would also express my gratitude to David Grisold, who was very supportive when I had my fly fishing shop.

But no doubt my biggest inspiration on my journey has been my beautiful wife Rosa. She has constantly supported me in the life I have chosen. She hears all the stories, and shares all the laughs and disappointments.

I would thank you all again for coming tonight, and I wish you all good health and great fishing.



Vale Brian Anthony (Tony) Johns – 1940 – 2017

A tribute by his dear friend Robert Roles

I recently joined a large group of mourners to farewell long-time friend Tony Johns on a glorious autumn morning at Corryong, in Victoria's north-east.

Tony was a VFFA member and Honorary Life Member, having joined the Association in 1983. He loved his VFFA cloth badge sewn on his fishing vest.

Tony originally migrated from the United Kingdom and settled in Mount Evelyn in Melbourne's east. He and his then wife Evelyn moved to Corryong, where Tony embraced the trout fishing opportunities that the area was well known for.

He loved all forms of fishing, but was especially competent as a fly fisher and fly tier. He joined the Corryong Angling Club, and subsequently became involved in the welding construction of metal stiles that were placed on fences along the local streams. Tony was extended a life membership for his contribution at the club.

I recall fishing one evening with Tony in the 1960s at Lake Eucumbene. There were trout rising everywhere, and in all the excitement Tony broke his tubular glass fly rod below the ferrule. This would have destroyed most people's hopes, but Tony waded ashore, discarded the broken rod section, and returned to the action casting the top section only, with the line and reel tucked down in his waders. And he caught two three pounders that evening!

Tony's marriage to Evelyn came to an end when Evelyn passed away following a long illness. Some years later Tony met Clare and they enjoyed 14 years of marriage.

Tony had a sign propped against a tree outside their house in Corryong which

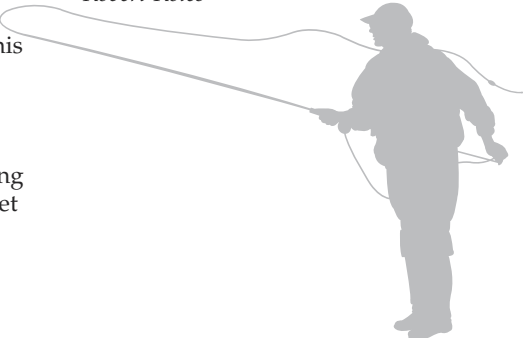


Tony Johns doing what he loved

stated: "Flies for sale, rod repairs, worms for sale".

I will miss not seeing this reminder of what Tony cared about as I drive through Corryong each summer.

Robert Roles



Vale Ron Millott

A tribute by his friend Peter Campbell.

We have lost a great mate. Ron passed away on Monday, June 19. He had not been well for a number of months. I have been privileged to know Ron and have been one of his close friends since he joined the Association in 1995.

Ron grew up in Footscray. When he left school he served an apprenticeship as a plumber, and on completion he successfully applied for a management role as a supervisor of maintenance plumbing at Parliament House in Melbourne. He held this position for many years and was held in high esteem for his capacity to get the job done.

In the late 1980s he was asked to go to China for four months to participate in a joint venture between the Australian and Chinese governments involving a large construction site. He directed operations successfully, working with a crew of 100 tradesmen.

I first met Ron at an egg-planting trip when the Association was heavily involved in the Vibert-Whitlock Box program. We met at Riddells Creek where we were planting eggs in the Riddells Creek, Emu Creek and Deep Creek systems. During the day I piggybacked Ron over several creek crossings, as he had forgotten his waders. We hit it off immediately. He was full of enthusiasm and willing to learn.

Over the following years Ron, Colin Morrison, myself and some others regularly fished together. On many Saturday afternoons during the summer and autumn we would head up and fish the Lauriston and Upper Coliban reservoir systems. We often fished well after dark, with mixed results, but always looked forward to a beer back at the car

when the fishing was over. Ron also enjoyed many trips to Omeo over the years. Each year during the Christmas break Ron stayed with Ernie McGregor, Peter McGregor's brother from the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club. They had a camp on the 'Bogong View', Mick Batty's property on the Big River above Glenn Wills. These trips were usually of eight or nine days duration spent in a serene and most beautiful part of the mountains.

We also enjoyed trips to Tasmania, staying at the Great Lake Hotel cabins. Ron loved fishing the Great Lake off the northern shore bays on warm summer evenings. We faced south looking into the reflections of the light from Miena whilst fishing the ripple with a large Highland Dun or a big Black Cricket. On one occasion Ron lost the biggest fish he had ever hooked when the hook pulled out as he was about to net it. He estimated it was between 8 and 9 lb.

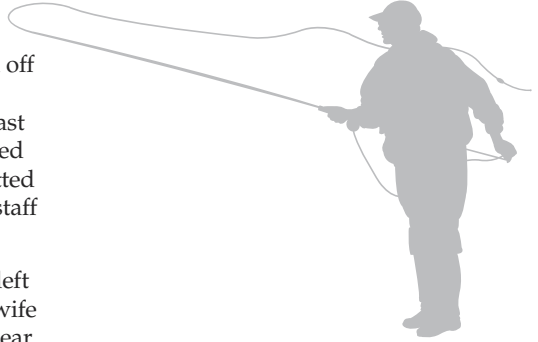
On one of our Eucumbene trips we were staying at the Portal and Ron talked me into doing the dawn patrol. This did not enthruse me at all, but he insisted that I join him, so I did. He asked me what fly to put on and I suggested a Hamill's Killer. Thirty minutes later Ron was yelling to me to bring the net. This one weighed in at 6 lb 4 oz. Ron then said, "I've caught my fish; it's time to go home!" But then he didn't get another touch for the rest of the trip.

In 2000 Ron relocated to Moruya on the New South Wales South Coast, having lost his first wife in 1994. Here he remarried and spent many happy years putting in lots of time on the golf course to lower his handicap, whilst also fishing for estuary perch and Australian bass with some success.

In 2011 Ron and Lois returned to Melbourne and settled at West Essendon. They subsequently headed off on several overseas trips which they enjoyed immensely. However in the last five or six months Ron's health declined alarmingly. His family had him admitted to John Faulkner Hospital where the staff made him as comfortable as possible.

We shall all miss Ron very much. He left an indelible mark on myself and my wife and many others. Farewell Ron, my dear friend.

Peter Campbell



Fly Fishing Art – Lyn Smith

Lyn attended the June meeting to hear Bernard Holbery's presentation. She brought with her some sketches of flies that she had drawn, and has since offered to provide us with sketches of flies to include in our newsletter issues. Here is her first contribution – the Dr Walk.

Lyn offers the following explanatory note:

My father was a fly fisherman—he came to it later in life, though he always fished. He took all of us fishing too, with fishing rods he'd made specially for each of us. Mostly we fished Googong Dam and the

local rivers in the countryside around Canberra.

I don't fish anymore but I love rivers and I love all the forms of the trout fly, which I now paint. Last year I met Bernard and asked him what he thought about these paintings and whether people in the fly fishing community would be interested in them. He's been a source of great advice and suggestions, and also provided some classic Marysville area river flies, one of which you see here: the Dr Wark.

L.C. Smith, www.artofthetroutfly.com



*A Victorian classic –
the Dr Walk*

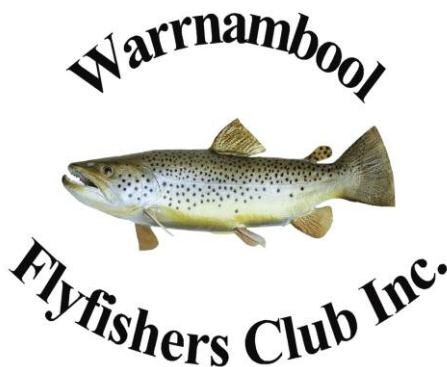
An Invitation - Warrnambool Fly Fishers' 2017 Annual Game Dinner Invitation

The Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Game Dinner will be held this year on Saturday, July 22, in the Members Lounge at the Warrnambool Racing Club Pavilion on Grafton Road, Warrnambool. We would invite any VFFA member who wishes to join us on the night to attend as a paying guest.

As usual, it will be a BYO wine and beer night. The cost of the dinner has been set at \$75. Before dinner drinks with canapés will begin at 6:00 pm, and we will sit for the first course at about 7:00 pm for the start of what will undoubtedly be another night of fabulous food and company.

Because of the size of the venue the number attending is limited to 65, so it would be greatly appreciated if VFFA members wishing to attend would confirm their booking soon, and no later than July 20.

Before July 14 I can be contacted on my email address, jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au, or by calling me 03 5562 5168 to make a booking.



E-mail: jtblakeslee@westvic.com.au

Phone: 0355 625168

P.O. Box 1380 Warrnambool 3280

Between July 14 and July 20 anyone wishing to book a place should phone our President, Adrian Jacobs, on 0437 620 972.

Jim Blakeslee
Social Committee
Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club

Some Important Events in the Next Few Months:

Our calendar lists a number of exciting events happening in the VFFA in the next few months.

In August we have the tree planting on the Rubicon, and of course our Annual Dinner with Greg French as guest speaker. September is the month for our Australian Fly Fishers' Art & Craft Show.

In October there are trips to Thorpdale to join with the Latrobe Valley Club Members fishing their well-stocked dams, followed by the annual

Purrumbete trip a week later. Early November is the date for the annual trip to Warrnambool, which is always a feature.

But there are three more events that deserve special mention.

Free Casting Tuition:

On Sunday, August 20, a half-day of casting tuition has been organised at the Red Tag Pool in Fairfield for those who would like to tune up their fly casting for the new season. There is no cost for this,

and Ian Sambell will be our instructor. Ian is a superb caster in his own right and has completed the qualifications necessary to be recognized as an International Federation of Fly Fishers Certified Casting Instructor (IFFF CCI).



It's all in the technique – Ian Sambell demonstrating distance casting

Ian is planning to run three sessions on the day:

- 1) Seven good reasons to roll cast;
- 2) Slack-line presentations to ensure drag free drifts;
- 3) Going for distance – tweaking your cast for greater distance

The day will commence at 10:00 am, and each session will run for 30 minutes. There will be breaks between sessions so that members will have opportunities to practice and receive lots of individual tuition.

Ian is very enthusiastic about this program, and it deserves our support.

RISE Fly Fishing Film Festival

Alex Evans, one of our very hard-working council members (who incidentally has done countless hours of work in helping with the preparation of the Art & Craft Show) has also done preliminary work on two other exciting events.

He is working to organise a VFFA group expedition to the 2017 RISE Fly Fishing Film Festival. This is to be held at the Elsternwick Cinema (9 Gordon St,

Elsternwick) on Monday, September 4, 7:15 – 9:15pm. Information is available at <http://www.gin-clear.com/filmfest/>

Produced by Gin Clear Media, who have given us some of the very best fly fishing DVDs in recent years, this year's show will feature the premier of Nick Reygaert's new TV series "PureFly NZ series 2", along with some other short fly fishing films from around the world. Tickets cost \$32, and VFFA members will meet for drinks just prior to the show. More details next month.

VFFA trip to the Goulburn River

Following discussion at Council, Alex has also been making enquiries regarding a proposed weekend at Thornton, probably on November 25 & 26. This will include two days of guided fishing on the Goulburn River for up to 12 people, with the guides being the team from the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre at Thornton. The fishing experience will comprise a mixture of guided drift boat fishing (taking anglers into otherwise inaccessible parts of the river) and guided bankside fishing, learning tactics honed by the GVFFC team.

The approximate cost for the weekend will be \$400 per person, and this will include all guiding, two nights accommodation, and a BBQ dinner on the Saturday night organised by GVFFC.

For further information contact Alex Evans at aksce@outlook.com or mobile 0475 409 084.



Drifting the Goulburn

Bruce Whitehead Perpetual Trophy Western Lakes Challenge 2017

... report by Hugh Maltby

The weekend of June 23 - 25 saw 22 members from the VFFA and Bairnsdale Fly Fishers venture down to the twin crater lakes of Bullen Merri and Purrumbete to compete for the Bruce Whitehead Western Lakes Perpetual Trophy.

On the Saturday we were joined by Adrian Jacobs, Jim Blakeslee and Peter Hussey from the Warrnambool Flyfishers Club. They brought their boats and acted as gillies for some our team. Thank you guys.

It was a trip to remember. The weather was very kind but cold, and the friendship and camaraderie very warm and welcoming.

The competition, however, was fierce. The rules were simple - biggest trout wins. Whilst we, the VFFA team, led the competition on Saturday evening, the Bairnsdale boys were not to be outdone and launched a Sunday dawn patrol on Lake Bullen Merri and produced a



*Ingomar Matthes and Bruce Whitehead
with the trophy*

magnificent fish of 3 lb 14½ oz, caught by Ingomar Matthes, to clinch the trophy.

Whilst we were not successful in bringing home the trophy we certainly cleaned up on the numbers game. Our biggest trout was a rainbow of 2 lb 4 oz caught by Hugh Maltby, and the overall



The Bairnsdale boys were hard to beat. Fierce competition but great camaraderie made the earth whitehead Western Lakes Perpetual Trophy a huge success.



Socially – the trip was a huge success



Lots of fish caught, with this fine brown typical

*What on earth did
this fish eat?*

>>>

team tally was twelve rainbows, one brown, seven Chinook, and five redfin. The Warrnambool boys accounted for a further twelve rainbows and twelve redfin.

On Saturday night we converged on the Commercial Hotel in Camperdown, where we were joined by guest of honour Bruce Whitehead and his delightful wife Dorothy. We enjoyed a wonderful evening with our respective presidents, Mike Jarvis and Trevor Stow, welcoming our special guests and reaffirming the special relationship that exists between our two organisations.

The competition finished on Sunday at lunchtime, and then we all met at the Lake Purrumbete Rotunda for the presentations and BBQ lunch.

Bruce Whitehead presented the trophy and congratulated Ingomar and Trevor. He then briefly described his 50 year relationship with the Bairnsdale club and how he was present when the Dudley Lee (Donger) Trophy, made by Jack Myles from the VFFA, was first awarded nearly 50 years ago.

Bruce then made a personal presentation of a landscape of the Western Lakes in Tasmania painted by long time Bairnsdale member and artist Peter McGregor. Bruce had won this painting at a Bairnsdale annual dinner sometime back in the 1980s. Trevor graciously received the gift, indicating that it would be hung in the Mitta Lodge overlooking Peter's favourite fishing spot.

The Bruce Whitehead Perpetual Trophy was made from a piece of hard wood timber collected from the Mitta Lodge site and made by Peter Burls, a Vietnam Veteran friend, and donated by he and Hugh Maltby.

A full history of the trophy will appear in a later issue of Fly Lines.

In all a sensational weekend enjoyed by all who attended, and watch out Bairnsdale - we will be coming to get it back next year.



*Bruce Houghton
with a very
presentable
Purrumbete
rainbow*

CANDY CANE

... Cane Day report by Dermot O'Brien

It was like kids in a candy shop for the 160 or so cane rod enthusiasts who turned up at the VFFA's recent Cane Day.

It was chilly, but the organizers were blessed with a beautiful sunny morning, and a good time was enjoyed by all at the Red Tag pool in Fairfield.

Australia's only full-time cane rod maker, Nick Taransky based in Canberra, came especially for the day and said that for many years the VFFA Cane Day was the only event of its type in Australia. He commented that it was good to see the mix of new and classic rods.

Nick says that there are now about 50 people making cane rods in Australia and cane rod making is now in an era of "steady interest." Nick has plenty of orders but takes only five new orders at the start of each year and those buyers can expect to get the finished rod in the same year.

On the question of whether it is cane or bamboo, Nick says he has heard both for many years and there is no problem with either.

Several other rod makers who attended on the day included Tony Young from Trafalgar in Victoria who has been making rods for many years and is self-taught. Also there were brothers John and Peter Austin, who just make rods for themselves, and having cast one of their rods on the day I can attest that their rods can certainly hold their own.

John says he made his first cane rod from bamboo garden stakes he bought at a nursery and that he has made all his own jigs and planing forms. Now that is commitment! His brother Peter tells us he has two cane rods in mid-production at the moment.

Also, Max Lee from Eltham attended, has made 20 rods and makes about two a year for his own use or to swap. He describes himself as a hopeful beginner.

Some of the classic rods had seen better days and we can only wonder about their stories and about the old timers who fished them. However, there were surprises. Gordon Baker turned up with an old store-bought Hartleys rod, only to find that it cast as well as some of the modern rods. Happy days Gordon! >>>



Another very successful Cane Day event was held recently, as is readily apparent from the large turnout at the Red Tag casting pool



A bit chilly, but the sun shone and no one minded



This reel was a magnificent example of superb craftsmanship



Bintoro and Bernard enjoyed catching up



Was there a tangle here?



These cane rods are superb to use and a delight to behold



Some of the many cane rods in attendance – all treasured

Cane rods can be and are a thing of beauty and craftsmanship, and the message from the makers was not to leave them in the cupboard or glass cabinet, but to fish them.

A couple of displays were also present - Peter Clayton with a vintage tackle display and Jim Baumgurtel with some of his products from Flyfinz.

Organizer David Grisold thanked everyone for coming and taking a continued interest in Cane Day, which is regarded as a long-standing VFFA event. President Mike Jarvis was delighted with the turnout and thanked the organizer David Grisold, barbecue whiz Hugh Maltby and Joe Haslauer for the efforts.



This Month's Yarn

(... from May 1964)

"You told us some time ago," said Choco, as he pushed a \$10 note across the bar to replenish McTaggart's empty glass, "That you had once caught three fish on the one cast and with only one fly tied on your tippet. How on earth did you manage that?"

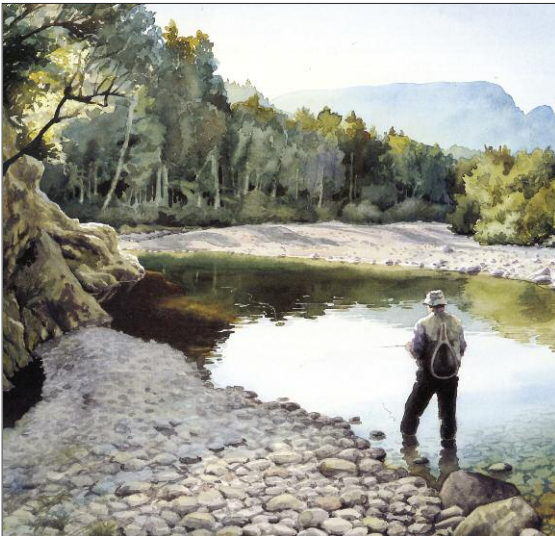
"Well," said McTaggart, looking more relaxed now that his glass was being topped up, "It was all very simple really, though I guess luck played a part. I was fishing the upper Buckland, well above where most of the tourists flog it, and the fish were both plentiful and hungry. And I was using a special fly of my own creation that was exceptionally effective. It was a large fly with lots of black hackle. I used to call it the Deadly Nightshade. It slaughtered fish everywhere I used it, as they just couldn't resist it."

"Anyway, I had arrived at this wide, smooth sweeping bend on the river and was fishing the traditional style – casting the fly across and letting it swing down

and around. Suddenly three quite hefty rainbows streaked out from behind a boulder, almost fighting each other to get to the fly first. The first trout rushed the fly with his mouth wide open, and in his eagerness the fly went into his mouth and then shot out through his gill cover. The second trout was just as eager to get at the fly, and he did the very same thing. So by this time there were two fish on the line and the fly was still flapping loose in the current. So the third trout grabbed it. I struck immediately and hooked this one firmly. Now I have to admit that three very lively and quite large rainbows on the one line was quite a handful in the heavy current, but I eventually got them all in."

"Well," said Choco, wearing smirk. "You could have just as easily cranked the story up to four or even five fish caught on that one fly."

"Yes, I agree," said McTaggart, "But then you only asked for three!"



*Tichborne watercolour -
Kauaeranga River*

Fish Habitat Destruction on the Little Snowy Creek

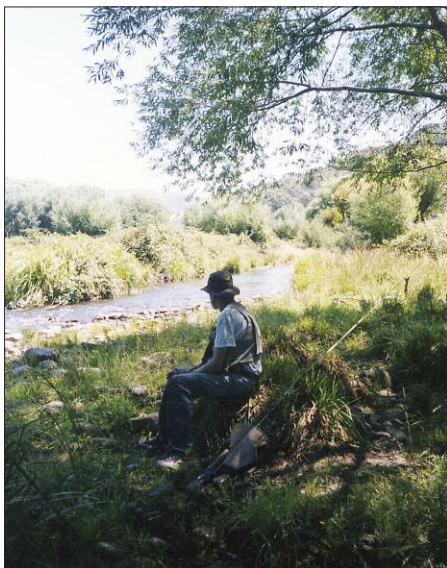
... from Robert Roles

My good friend Greg Hellsten is a member of the Bendigo Flyfishers and is also a VRfish delegate. Greg and a friend of his went to Eskdale near Mitta Mitta for the June closing weekend, so I asked him if he could bring back a report on the Little Snowy Creek rehabilitation program undertaken by the North East Catchment Management Authority.

This work involved eradication of all willows from the Eskdale camping ground, upstream for about three or four kilometres. The riparian strip beside the creek was then planted with juvenile gum trees, many of which are now six to eight metres in height. This activity took place before January to 2014, probably during 2013. I understand that the Greenwell's Fly Fishers contributed manpower during the tree planting phase, no doubt thinking they were on a winner.

It came as a shock to me when I received Greg's email report, which included four Google Earth aerial photos. The farmer who had granted access to his property told Greg the area had received five inches of rain in 2016, and the valley was in flood. The Little Snowy Creek, without any willow trees to stabilise its banks, was torn apart by the ferocity of the floodwater. The gum tree plantings offered no protection, being juvenile vegetation and planted away from the creek banks.

The result of this event is the destruction of fish habitat, and massive damage to private property. I first fished Little Snowy Creek, a small but important tributary of the Mitta Mitta River near Eskdale, in January 2004. The grasshopper fishing at that time 'was to die for'. The creek at that time was



Robert roles on the banks of the Little Snowy Creek in the days before the willows were so destructively removed

completely lined with crack willows, and during my fishing I noticed floodwater debris deposited two and even three metres up in the creek bank willows, indicating serious flooding prior to January 2004. But there was no obvious damage to the creek channel or the banks of that little stream. It was obvious that the crack willows protected the integrity of the creek bed and the banks as well.

The CMA managers need to review their willow removal methodology, because the present approach is to remove all the "environmental weeds" in one planned operation (as at Eskdale). Consideration should be given to retaining 'key' mature willows that help protect spots in vulnerable locations. Obviously new riparian plantings cannot protect the creek to the same extent as mature willows.

If this new approach was adopted there would need to be supervision from trained CMA staff in the field to instruct machinery operators as to what, and what not, to pull out. Key trees need to be clearly marked to avoid mistakes. Meanwhile the recovery of the Little Snowy Creek will be painfully slow, if at all.

I realise that this will be somewhat controversial, but I need to convey to readers that sometimes there is a better way of doing something. The CMA has made a big mistake at Eskdale by removing all of the willows without factoring in the consequences of a serious flood. The revegetation along the creek with small gum trees may be beneficial in the years to come (??) Only time will tell.

There is also the issue of shade, or in this case, the lack of it. In our *Fly Lines* newsletter in July 2016 I wrote about the state of the Little Snowy Creek without the benefit of willow tree shade. Gum trees just don't cut it! The whole scenario was a disaster. It is doubtful the damage caused along Little Snowy Creek can be reversed, such is scale of the destruction. Farmers with paddocks along the creek are very unhappy with the loss of soil from their properties.

At the two Trout Conferences staged at Mansfield in 2015 and 2016 representation from CMA, Arthur Rylah Institute, and Victoria Fisheries made presentations to a 200+ audience with the main emphasis being the importance of quality habitat, which is vital to the future of freshwater fishing. Their message was clear – habitat was key.

It should be obvious that the removal of willow trees will adversely impact the stability of creek and river systems, and the absence of willow tree shade in our very hot north-east Victorian summers can only degrade the habitat for trout and

other aquatic creatures. In January 2016 (before the flood) the water temperature in the Little Snowy Creek above the Eskdale camping ground was an unheard of 29°C, this being due to the creek flowing the three to four kilometres where all willows had been removed by CMA.

In January 2004 I fished the Little Snowy Creek for three days in the area shown on the Google Earth aerial photo. All the willow trees were intact at that time and there were no signs of flood damage to the creek or to its banks. There was, however, plenty of flood debris in the willow canopy.

The message here is clear – willows play a major role in limiting flood destruction and in keeping soil erosion to a minimum, thus making a valuable contribution to quality trout habitat. The grasshopper fishing I experienced in 2004, before the flood damage and the removal of the trees, was the best ever from a small stream.

I hope my message gets out there.

Robert Roles



Willows are needed on our streams

Flying Blind on the West Coast

... by Philip Weigall

Fishing blind? I know some people who just won't do it. For them, it's sight fishing or nothing. And it isn't difficult to make an argument for the latter over the former. Aside from the immeasurable confidence boost that comes from casting to a fish you can actually see, there's the excitement of watching its response. Even a last moment refusal can leave you breathless.

For all that, my last two trips have centred around blind fishing. And not because the sight fishing failed. I knew before I packed the car we'd be flying blind, because the species we would be targeting rarely reveal themselves – at least not on the Victorian west coast in winter. Down here, bream are usually our main objective, though even bycatch like Australian salmon or estuary perch usually come to a fly fished blind.

Sight fishing can push your senses to the limit including hearing (should that be sight/sound fishing?) as you squint and stare and listen for the often subtle clues that give a fish away. It's exhilarating when you pull it off; especially on a tough day when the light is bad and the other signals are few. Then, somewhere deep in your genetic memory, a hunter-gatherer beats his chest at victory against the odds. >>>



A chunky estuary salmon, fished up blind.



Salmon in the big west coast surf are usually impossible to see. Spinning the surf may be the easy (sensible?) way to catch them, but this trip, I did manage a couple on fly.

But let me put it to you that blind fishing success can be every bit as exciting and rewarding – and because of the sheer level of difficulty, perhaps even more so. Here I really should switch terminology to blind searching, because when I'm hunting a west coast bream, that's what I'm doing. Although there's usually no sign whatsoever of the fish, I'm anticipating where they might be, how they might be feeding, and what I need to make my fly do to get one to eat. This is all done with no visual reinforcement at all. Ten big bream might nose to within a centimetre of my fly, but in the discoloured water, lit by a feeble winter sun, I'd never know it.

Instead, I need to guess where the fish might be. This trip, on the over-full Aire estuary, we couldn't even see the bream-attracting weed-beds – we had to rely on the feel of the fly bumping them a metre down. On another estuary, the Painkalac, I strained to sense the fly bouncing along a patch of clean riverbed where a bream might mistake it for a crab or yabby.

And then there's the take. We can all feel the decisive hits, but it's detecting the featherlight enquiries that can turn a miss into a fish in the net. Sometimes, when a blind fisher is really in tune, it seems the take, or imminent take, is detected by some sort of sixth sense. I'm re-reading Guy de la Valdene's wonderful memoir 'On the Water', and in one chapter he describes how his retired bird dog, Heather, will cock her head in expectation a couple of seconds before an invisible bass, deep in his pond, hits the lure.)

The last bream of the trip came on a section of the Barham estuary we often ignore as too featureless, but gouging tidal currents had transformed it. Doubly encouraged by an unexpected follow, I worked a rock ledge drop-off, trying to



Even under a bright sun, most Painkalac Creek bream come by feel, not sight.



A bream located by first feeling for the weed-beds with the fly.

keep the green BMS fly deep while not snagging it on the sandstone. When it came, I could see but not feel the faintest twitch in the line; enough for me to strip back and hook a silvery bream. That fish was the smallest bream of the trip, but it was caught in an obscure spot, hooked by responding to the tiniest twitch, and I couldn't have felt more satisfied.



FLY OF THE MONTH

A Stillwater Nymph – the Frenchie



I was spending some money recently at a tackle shop sale (not unusual for me) and fell into conversation with Marshall, a member of the Red Tag Fly Fishing Club. We talked about our winter fly fishing options, which of course means lake fishing now as our rivers are closed. Marshall described success he'd had recently fishing Moorabool and Talbot Reservoirs, and also gave me tying details of a nymph that had proved proving particularly successful this year.

Here is a description of Marshall's Frenchie Nymph, which I gather from the Red Tag Fly Fishers' newsletter, is very popular with their members.

Materials:

- Hook: Long shank wet fly hook – sizes 10 – 14.
- Thread: Brown 8/0 UNI-thread.
- Tail: A few cock pheasant tail fibres, from the same feather as for the body.
- Bead: Bright orange tungsten bead, size 3.2 mm typically but appropriate to the hook size.
- Rib: Fine copper wire.
- Body: Dyed dark red or brown cock pheasant tail fibres.
- Thorax: UV2 – Seal-X neon pink dubbing.

Tying Procedure:

1. Slide the tungsten bead onto the hook, then put the hook in the vice.
2. Run some thread from behind the bead along the shank to the bend of the hook, then tie in the tail fibres and a short length of copper wire for the rib.
3. Also tie in four or five cock pheasant tail fibres for the body. Then wind the thread back to a point about one third of the shank length from the bead.
4. Wind the cock pheasant tail fibres around the hook shank up to the thread to form the body. Tie in the pheasant tail fibres and trim away the waste.
5. Now wind the rib making turns opposite the direction for the body fibres so that the rib doesn't sink in and get lost in the body fibres. Four turns of the rib evenly spaced should do. Then tie off the copper wire and trim the waste.
6. Take some of the Seal-X neon pink dubbing and add it to the thread, then wrap it around the shank up to the back of the bead to form the thorax.
7. Complete the fly by whip finishing the thread right behind the bead.

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 that can be read and saved on iPads and tablets like eBooks
- Calendar of all activities that can be synced with all you digital device calendars
- Gallery of events - Photos and Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand



LIBRARY NEWS

A note from our librarian, Rick Dugina:

Because of impending changes and development at the Celtic Club our library books are to be placed in storage and won't be available for borrowing for a while. We'll keep you posted.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

- Book *The Country For An Angler* (the History of the VFFA)\$70.00 each
- Book *Geehi to Great Lake*.....\$45.00 each
- Book *Time Flies: A Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Fly Box 1932-2015*.....\$70.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Jason Platts prior to the monthly general meeting on telephone 0412 544 769.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2016 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 • Millbrook Lakes • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies
- Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne
- Hook Up Bait & Tackle •



Tichborne watercolour

GREY GHOST

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

July 2017

- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 12 Noon (Lunchtime Meeting)
Guest Speaker: Daniel Hackett, Tasmanian guide
- 22 Saturday Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner
- 24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 31 Monday Closing date for entries in the Australian Fly Fishers' Art & Craft Show

August 2017

- 6 Sunday Tree Planting on Rubicon River,
Convener - Dermot O'Brien
- 14 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 20 Sunday VFFA casting tuition day with Ian Sambell at the Red Tag Pool – 10 AM
- 25 Friday Annual Dinner, with Guest Speaker Greg French
(Well known Tasmanian fishing guide and author)
Time: 6:30 for 7:00 PM commencement.

September 2017

- 2 Saturday Rivers again open to trout fishing
- 4 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 13 - 16 Australian Fly Fishers' Art & Craft Show, Steps Gallery, Carlton
- 22 Thursday Annual General Meeting – 8:00 PM

October 2017

- 1 Sunday Annual Dam Day at Thorpdale with Latrobe Valley Flyfishers (TBC)
- 6 – 8 Annual Trip to Purrumbete (TBC)
- 19 Thursday General Meeting - 8:00 pm: Auction of Fishing Tackle (TBC)
- 23 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM

November 2017

- 11 – 13 Annual Trip to Warrnambool (TBC)
- 16 Thursday General Meeting - 8:00 pm: Speaker (TBC)
- 20 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 25 – 27 Proposed trip to Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre at Thornton (TBC)

December 2017

- 4 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 14 Thursday Christmas Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
Speaker: Travis Dowling – Executive Director of Fisheries Victoria