

FLY LINES



JUNE 2015

Our guest speaker for the June 18 general meeting will be Craig Coltman. Craig is a very experienced and skilled angler with impeccable angling credentials. He has represented Australia in a number of world championships, has fished in exciting places all over the world, has contributed articles to popular fly fishing magazines, and currently works as a guide in both Tasmania and Victoria.

Craig is an excellent speaker and this is a presentation you will not want to miss.

Thursday, June 18,
8:00pm, at the
Celtic Club

PLEASE make a Dinner booking
by 12 noon on Thursday, June 18
by phoning
0498 254 497
and leaving a message.

June Meeting
with Craig Coltman



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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

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

President

Hamish Hughes

Email: president@vffa.org.au

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.org.au

Honorary Secretary

David Grisold

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: Dermot O'Brien

Junior Vice President: Mike Jarvis

Councillors: Hugh Maltby

Richard Kos

Peter Boag

John Permewan

Terry Rogers (Immediate Past President)

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New Members

This month we warmly welcome two more new members. David Edney and Charles Bradley are now members of the Association, and we trust that they enjoy many years of fulfilling and enjoyable membership.

In the meantime, President Hamish has suggested that it would be good to include photos of new members in *Fly Lines*, so that when we see them at meetings we can ensure they feel welcomed. Three of our new members who listed in the May issue were present at the auction, so please look out for:



James Carter



Alex Evans



David Maltby

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



Tichborne watercolour – MangaWhero River

President's Message



There were many happy members at last month's meeting. We had a good turn up at the Shamrock Restaurant beforehand. The food and service were excellent and

we all went to the auction in good spirits. It was my pleasure to welcome new members James Carter, Alex Evans and David Maltby. Beforehand Peter Boag, David Grisold and Hugh Maltby had done a wonderful job cataloguing and presenting the excellent rods, quality reels and beautifully tied flies as well as many books. Hughie did a marvellous job as auctioneer keeping the night moving and Rick Dugina and Richard Kos looked after the finances. There were many bargains and all successful bidders were delighted with their purchases. The commissions to the VFFA exceeded \$900 and will go towards production and distribution of *Fly Lines*. Well done all. The only negative on the night was that a number of our members had not made their dinner booking by phoning the VFFA message bank by noon. It was a great credit to the Celtic Club catering staff that they coped with our unexpected extra numbers perfectly. In future please help us, help them by remembering to book ahead.

Last month Dermot O'Brien, Mike Jarvis and I had a meeting with Andrew McKenzie, a Councillor of the NSW Rod Fishers to compare notes about our respective organisations. They meet monthly at the Union, University & Schools Club of Sydney at lunchtime, not in the evening, as this better suits their members who come from both sides of the

harbour. We discussed this at our May Council meeting and thought that it may suit some VFFA members, who cannot easily join us on Thursday evenings, to attend a lunch General Meeting instead. To see if this is so we are considering holding our October 15 meeting at lunchtime. Organising is still under way.

On September 17 we have the AGM. The Association has received tremendous support from the efforts of each of your current Councillors, some of whom have served for many years, many in senior roles. Understandably a number will move on and we need new blood to take us forward. I particularly would like to welcome a number of newer and younger members on the Council for 2016. Would you like to nominate yourself? Or do you know a member who you can encourage to nominate? Please give serious thought to your wishes.

My thanks to Richard Kos who arranged a most enjoyable Closing Weekend trip to Alexandra. I finished the open season on the Goulburn River the same way as I started. I hardly saw a rise and certainly had no chance of casting to a fish. At the start of the season I was told the river was too high, this time it was too low. However as I am sure you will read elsewhere Kossy was successful in the Athlone Cottages' dam. And we had fun at the Sunday BBQ on Dobson's farm and just escaped in time to dodge the deluge.

Sunday casting will now have started at the Red Tag Pool, Fairfield. It is a very sociable way to start the day in the fresh air each winter Sunday. Why don't you join your VFFA colleagues for a cuppa and maybe a cast?

Tight lines,



June Meeting with Guest Speaker Craig Coltman

An experienced angler, Craig has travelled to a number of diverse locations across the world, mastering his skills and techniques in his pursuit of the “perfect fish”. Whilst trout are Craig’s favourite sport fish, he has also chased and landed Golden Trevally in Western Australian waters, Kingfish offshore from Narooma, Bonefish on the Christmas Island flats, Bream in the Mallacoota estuary and most recently Giant Tarpon, exceeding 150 lbs, off the Florida Keys.

Craig’s fishing obsession first became apparent as a child when he continuously fell into his grandparents goldfish pond.

Growing up in Ballarat, he had easy access to some of Victoria’s premier fly fishing lakes and rivers, including Lake Wendouree where he perfected loch style fishing techniques. Mentored by his uncle, Mike Spry, Craig honed his stream-craft skills on the Swampy Plains, Thredbo, Eucumbene, and Nariel Rivers of Victoria and NSW.

In his first attempt at competition fishing Craig finished 3rd in the National Fly Fishing Championships held in Tasmania in 1994, and has since gone on to represent the Ballarat Fly Fishers’ Club, and Victoria, and Australia in many competitions. As a member of the Australian team, Craig competed in the World Fly Fishing Championships in Ireland (1995), New Zealand (2008), and Scotland (2009). As Captain of the Australian team for the Swedish (2001) and French (2002) World Championships and Australian (1999), English (2000) and Welsh (2002) Commonwealth teams he is well respected amongst his peers for his experience, commitment and extensive knowledge.



Craig takes every opportunity to grow and improve his knowledge, skills and techniques and is happy to share his experiences with other fisherman. He is a proactive contributor in the fishing community and a member of several groups concerned with fisheries and environmental issues, including the Ballarat and District Angling Association, Ballarat Fly Fishers’ Club and Ballarat Acclimatisation Society.

In 1981 Craig made his first visit to Tasmania, and captivated by its beauty and the high quality of Tasmanian fishing, he purchased a property in Miena and regularly spends a large part of each trout season fishing the Tasmanian rivers and lakes. Since selling his business Craig plans to fish in as many fabulous locations as possible, including spending more time in Tasmania.

In 2007, Craig used his long service leave to guide for Neil Grose. Based in Tasmania, this first guiding experience taught him the importance of adaptability and the guiding skills necessary to ensure his client’s experience a successful and satisfying day on the water. He now regularly guides in local waters for

Millbrook Lakes and is looking forward to once again guiding on the Tasmanian waters. "Tasmania is the most interesting and exciting location to guide, as there is always fish moving somewhere. You just need to know where to look!"

Craig is a first class speaker and presenter with an incredible wealth of fly fishing skill and experience. You won't want to miss this meeting – Thursday, June 18.

July Meeting – Guest Speaker: Josh Bradshaw

Josh started fishing Tasmania's lakes and rivers with his grandfather when he was old enough to walk. First trips involved upstream casting with worms on the creeks and rivers around Hobart, while longer trips involved overnight stays at Arthurs Lake and the club shack at Lake Sorell. He started fly fishing when he was an early teenager under the tutelage of members from the Tasmanian Fly Tiers Club and quickly became equally as passionate about fly tying.

In his early twenties, Josh started working as the fishing guide at Bronte Park Chalet, a position he held for six years. He has

also worked for Blue Lake Lodge on Arthurs and, most recently, for Peter Hayes on Brumby's Creek.

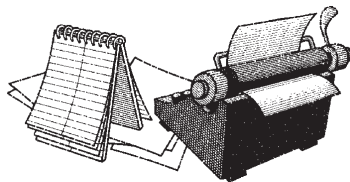
Josh's passion for fly fishing has seen him travel extensively across the country, the UK, Europe, Central Asia and New Zealand.

Currently he and his partner, Renee, are the General Managers of the Pumphouse Point Wilderness Retreat on Lake St Clair, in Tasmania's Central Highlands. The retreat offers access to some of the best fly fishing water the country has to offer and Josh is continuing to pursue his love of fly fishing and fly tying in his current role.



Josh with a magnificent brown from the Macquarie

From the EDITOR'S DESK



“When the wind is in the west the fish bite best; when the wind is in the east the fish bite least.” (*Old but oft-quoted piece of fishing advice.*)

Is it really true? Hubert swears it applies to New Zealand’s South Island. When he’s fishing around Gore with an easterly breeze blowing he complains and mutters a lot and holds low expectations of success, then isn’t surprised when his expectations are met. As for me, I’m quite ambidextrous – I can fail to catch fish in any wind.

I know that the wind is an important factor when fishing lakes, but if it’s a problem on rivers I usually just go and find a more sheltered spot. Now all this huffing and puffing about the wind (sorry!) raises those endless discussions about weather and other physical conditions that affect our trout. The list is long – air temperature, water temperature, wind direction, wind strength, sky sunny or cloudy, rain being forecast or it bucketed down yesterday, seasons and daylight hours, moon phases and those pesky solunar tables. Then there’s the state of the water – high or low, fast or slow, clear or coloured.

Interestingly one prominent US guide suggests that the most important question has nothing to do with any of these. He wants to know when the water was last fished. If it hasn’t been worked over for several days then the trout are far more likely to cooperate, though I suspect this is more important for rivers than lakes.

And the one factor not yet mentioned – the barometer. I was always led to believe that for good fishing you needed a high or

at least rising barometric pressure. If it was low or going south I had my ready-made excuse: don’t expect much. But then I came across a podcast by Tom Rosenbauer, from the Orvis Company, who interviewed Reynolds Wolf, a keen US fly fisher and prominent meteorologist. Tom was trying to elicit some solid scientific connections between weather conditions and trout feeding behaviour, but Reynolds wasn’t offering much. He simply said that the connection between the weather and fish feeding habits ‘remained a mystery’. But in relation to air pressure and its affect on fish feeding he quoted the opinions of some top competition bass anglers and several professional fishermen who claimed that the fishing was usually better on a falling barometer. Reynolds even quoted reports of fabulous fishing on the days before hurricanes, when the air pressure plummeted. He then proposed a tentative thesis – “a primary driver of trout behaviour is the need for safety, and trout possibly feel more exposed on days with high air pressure and associated blue skies and clear water than when there is falling or low air pressure which is usually associated with dark days and churned up water where fish feel safer”.

My thoughts on this topic were prompted by the latest issue (June 2015) of the UK *Trout Fisherman* magazine. A correspondent had written in asking the question, “What effect, if any, does high or low air pressure have on fish behaviour?” Peter Cockwill, a well-known and highly respected British angler and fishing writer, replied by suggesting that: “Atmospheric pressure has a great deal of

influence on fish behaviour, with stable conditions, either high or low, much better than when the pressure is changing. Settled high pressure is usually associated with calm and often sunny conditions and on such days daytime fishing on lakes can be very testing. On the other hand, settled low-pressure periods bring wind, rain and overcast skies - and good fishing. It's very much a generalisation, but I would prefer low-pressure days or the day or two after a low-pressure system sets in rather than the actual day of the change." He also offered the suggestion that much of this is allied to the behaviour of insects themselves as they seem to know somehow when it's a good time to hatch and when to stop.

This same issue of *Trout Fisherman* also carried a fascinating article by a scientist called John Parker, who decided to measure atmospheric pressure each day at a popular UK lake, and then compare his readings with the average catch rates of anglers fishing the lake. So he measured water temperatures and barometric pressures every two hours during daylight hours on every day of the year at this lake, and then analysed his reams of data. His results suggested that "the actual catch rates for all seasons showed little bias towards any particular barometric pressure condition." He also notes that while it could be argued that falling pressure produced slightly better catch rates in winter and spring, and that steady pressure produced slightly better catch rates in summer and autumn, it should be remembered that he was comparing seasonal averages and not day-to-day catch rates. What was important from the results was the effect of water temperature, as catch rates fell at high water temperatures, despite there being an abundance of natural food available. Parker comments that rapid changes in pressure produce high winds

and these can also affect catch rates. Parker's final statement was this: "In our attempts to identify the key pieces of fishing's puzzle, I submit that barometric pressure, for one, can be disregarded."

Perhaps the final word on this might come from Philip Weigall, who in his fabulous book, *Fishing Sense*, writes: "As an avid weather watcher I can tell you I've had very good trout fishing in every kind of barometric pressure: rising fast, falling fast, low and stable, high and stable, you name it. For that matter, I've had really bad fishing in all sorts of barometric pressure too! ... In light of all this, it may come as a surprise that I don't reject barometric pressure entirely as an influence on trout fishing. At the very least, I have no doubt that barometric pressure changes can be detected by, and influence, some of the terrestrial food that trout eat..."

Philip continues: "Some competent fly fishers remain convinced that the barometer alone is an important influence on fishing success. I'm clearly not one of them; however, I will concede there are times when the behaviour of the trout isn't readily explained by the inputs we can observe. There are those days when I walk off the water with my friends, pleasantly confused about why the fishing was so productive... Beneath the frivolity is an underlying sense that, for all the science and technology at our disposal, there are things about trout and fly fishing we may never understand."

So there you go. And as Patrick McManus once said, "The two best times to fish is when it's rainin' and when it ain't." And somewhere in David Scholes's many books he suggests that if the barometer worries you then drop it in the bin on your way out the door.

Tight lines, Lyndon Webb

A Report on the May Auction

The May meeting was an auction of fishing equipment and books from the estate of Ross Jordan. As the catalogue in last month's newsletter indicated, the number of lots for sale was daunting, so auctioneer Hughie Maltby was still calling for bids and knocking lots down at 10:30pm. Auctions are always popular and a good crowd gathered, so bidding on a number of highly sought after books and items of equipment was strongly contested. A magnificent Peter McKean cane rod drew a lot of interest and was finally sold for well over \$500. The auction included several boxes of flies tied by Ross, and as he was a meticulous and skilled tier, there were many hundreds of beautifully tied flies for sale. As a consequence a number of our members took home supplies of quality

flies purchased at bargain prices. The final items on the catalogue were several containers of fly tying materials, including nine superb quality Metz cock hackles that drew a lot of interest.

Your editor invested in a delightful 8 foot 4/5 weight rod to add to his collection. Secretary Choco asked if this brought the number of rods possessed by the editor up to 400. Hardly, though the number is now close to 30, and the new acquisition is very light in the hand and casts a WF5F line superbly.

Final sales totalled well over \$4,000. Our thanks to Peter Boag and his helpers for the many hours spent cataloguing and preparing the lots for sale, and to Hughie Maltby for another very entertaining and expeditiously conducted auction.



Checking out items for sale



Auctioneer Hughie



Hughie and son David



The bidding was keen



Some great titles – any bids?



Anyone for cane?



Rick Dugina was kept busy keeping the records accurate



Not bad – worth a bid!



The Closing Weekend at Alexandra

It wasn't quite the end of the trout season for Victorian rivers, but eight of our members thoroughly enjoyed their 'Closing Weekend' at Athlone Country Cottages, just a few kilometres from Alexandra on the Goulburn River. The date was Friday May 29 through to Sunday May 31, and the team included Gordon Baker, Richard Salvado, Mick Crewes, Hamish Hughes, Mike Jarvis, Hughie Maltby, Alex Evans, and Richard Kos, with Bruce Houghton and his son Corey arriving on the Sunday.

Richard Kos, the Event Co-ordinator, arrived at lunchtime on the Friday, and was joined by the others as the afternoon progressed. The property has two dams stocked with rainbow trout, and the

guests were soon limbering up and firing off a few casts into the dam waters. Kossy fished his trusty Damsel Nymph and quickly connected with a lively rainbow.

The Cottages proved an excellent venue, and an ideal base for the weekend. Hosts Jennie and Linton worked hard to ensure that their guests were comfortably settled, and provided an ample replenishment of food and beverages. The gas barbecue was put to good use on the Friday evening, and the amateur chefs in the ranks soon conjured up a meal.

Saturday was a pleasant day weatherwise and the team set about some serious fishing. Kossy and Richard Salvado remained at the Cottages fished the dams,

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The fishing was a bit tough but the meals were great

while the others paired off and attacked the Goulburn. Hughie showed new member Alex Evans some of the more popular sections of the Goulburn, and most of the team fished various bits of the river, finishing up eventually at the Pondage. A few fish were sighted, including a large cruiser, but honours went to Kossy, who extracted (and returned) a number from the dams. As dusk descended it was back to the Cottages to gather round the barbecue.

On Sunday the weather was initially overcast and cool as the team packed up and headed to Dobson's property on the Goulburn for a final barbecue lunch on the river bank. A few fished the river but the trout were uncooperative. Soon after lunch a serious downpour commenced, necessitating a rapid departure.

All members were very impressed by their hosts, Jenny and Linton. The cost of staying for the two nights and three days was very reasonable and the proprietors indicated they would be willing to provide reduced rates for future VFFA groups staying there. The dams on the property provided easy access to those who didn't want to fish the more distant rivers in the Thornton area. The lack of fish caught over the weekend didn't detract from a great weekend together, and the Cottages proved an ideal venue.

Members interested in checking out the Cottages will find all information at www.athlonecountrycottages.com.au. Check it out and keep this place in mind if you're looking for some pleasant accommodation in the Thornton area. But don't forget to mention your VFFA membership.



President Hamish fishing the Goulburn at Dobson's



Mick Crewes – pondering whether he can get through all this lot



Mike Jarvis all set to go



Relaxing at Dobson's

In Memory Of Muz

Rick Keam salutes Murray 'Muz' Wilson.

Muz Wilson's little house and backyard spilled over with bits and pieces. The place was randomly strewn with fly-tying tools, threads and feathers and hooks, half-finished plumbing repairs, piled-up dishes, parts of an emu undergoing some toxic process in a tub, waders and rods and all things odd.

After visiting, a prominent fly fisher wrote a magazine profile full of appreciation, but saying 'I think he's a bit eccentric.' That sentence never made it past the tactful editor. But of course Muz was a bit eccentric: it goes with the territory. If you're not already a touch eccentric just to take up fulltime fly tying, you sure will be after 25 years of it.

I first met Muz in the early 1990s when he was working on telecommunications trenches in central Melbourne. He wandered in to the Compleat Flyfisher in his work boots and we talked fly tying, which I'd been forced into by the recession. I visited him at his flat in Preston and we swapped ideas and techniques. It emerged that he was a perennially hopeful Richmond Tigers fan. He was also a huge fan of A.K. Best, whose book on professional tying had been published a few years earlier. He was intent on returning to his home turf in Camperdown, where he could live cheaply, and becoming a fulltime tier himself, supplemented where necessary by shearing and seasonal farm work.

Like all the sea-changers and tree-changers longing for a life of independence, Muz 'followed his dream.' As many soon find out, the reality can be another matter. The price range for flies, and the customer perceptions that go with it, is now structured by cheap



Muz demonstrating his incredible tying skills

imports. At retail level, there is no way that a local tier can compete on price alone. Fortunately, there are folk who understand the situation and are willing to pay a little more to support local tiers, especially where the flies are their own hard-won design: their intellectual property, in fact.

Even with standard patterns, there is some scope to out-compete on quality. As Muz used to say, quality often relates to the unseen things: how the wraps of thread are placed and for what reason, and what lies between them, and the mindfulness of the whole process. He was also quick to point out the absurdity of anglers who were prepared to spend thousands on rods, reels, lines, clothing and accoutrements and travel, yet complained about having to pay more than a couple of dollars for a fly, which was the most essential single piece of their equipment.

People talk about 'professional' fly tying, but it is closer to piece-work. Muz knocked 'em out like sheep down the shearing-shed chute, hour after hour,



A sample of Muz's tying – his superb Damsel Nymph

while chain-smoking. His life became one long quest to find a way to make an hourly return befitting the highly-skilled artisan he was, let alone factor in the things that other people take for granted, like decent working hours and holidays and provision for illness and superannuation. It took a toll on his personal life and ultimately his health.

To those he trusted, Muz was the soul of generosity when it came to sharing knowledge of his favourite waters. Sometimes he trusted too many—he never forgave the local writer who divulged the location of the stretch of river codenamed 'The Aquarium'. On one occasion he thought he'd been engaged by a tackle store to guide John, a visiting Englishman, for a day. It promised to be a lucrative break from fly-tying, so he took John on a successful trip to Smythe's Creek. To be fair to John, he had probably only been told something vague like "Muz'll look after ya" and assumed the arrangement was non-commercial. Trip over, he just thanked Muz profusely and took off! It is fair to say that Muz did sometimes get his wires

crossed. Once I 'busted a gut' to meet him on the lower Hopkins by a certain hour so we could chase estuary perch and bream on the high tide. I found Muz all right in the pitch dark, at the appointed place and time. There was just one problem. It was low tide...

But Muz was never less than 100 per cent authentic. Like Don Quixote, he held steadfast to his impossible dream and he richly deserves to be saluted for it. Well done.



Some Reflections by Rex

(... an article by Rex Hunt.)

I don't write much these days. I enjoy writing though, especially about fishing. You will note I said fishing, not fly fishing. So I would assume some of you will wonder what I am going to write in this article. I must warn you that I will be mentioning a couple of forms of trout fishing that some of you will find boring, these being bait and spin fishing.

I do not subscribe to the "purist" tag. I find purists boring and they don't catch many fish. So there. Every time I go fishing I expect, just not hope, to catch a fish.

I fell in love with trout fishing on opening morning in 1961. I was 12 years of age. I was invited to the opening by Bill Jenkins, a past president of the Victorian Game Fishing Club. Bill was married to my cousin Rhonda. I found out he liked trout fishing so I hitched a ride.

From that morning on, when I caught my first brown trout of 2 pounds, I was hooked, so to speak. And I caught it, wait for it, on a big juicy scrub worm. Later that afternoon I caught my second brown in the Traralgon Creek, along with a couple of small blackfish.

Since that day, nearly 54 years ago, I have caught countless thousands of trout. I have caught them on worms, maggots, grasshoppers, crickets and Catchit. Do you remember that paste that smelt like salt and vinegar chips, and the trout loved it.

Before I get to the guts of my article, let me declare that this trout season in Victoria I have caught brown and rainbow trout in lakes and streams on bait, spinners and flies. I will be mentioning these trips but my real message is what fly fishing means to me.



Rex in good form on the Goulburn

A few of my dear friends in the VFFA will know that I had a decompression and fusion of my spine in February. The alternative was fishing from a wheel chair. The operation went well until I reacted, quite badly, to morphine. My surgeon told me I would make a dud druggie. I can live with that.

The worst thing about my surgery was the fact I could not, was not allowed to, go fishing. The surgeon could not give a rats anatomy whether it was whiting fishing, my beloved trout fishing, or fishing in a goldfish bowl. The message was loud and clear, and delivered with a stern face: not going, full stop.

The pain, the nausea, and my apprehension about whether I was ever going to be able to stand up again did not register on the scale of my fretting for a fishing fix. So it was with a little trepidation ... well maybe a whole lot of it, when I sat down recently with my surgeon for my last check up.

The X-rays looked good, I was walking 50 to 55 mins a day, had lost 10 kilos and it had stayed off, so all looking good. "Is there anything bothering you Rex?" was the question from the scalpel man.

"When can I go fishing?" I asked, well ... almost demanded. What came out of his mouth was the best thing I have ever heard, well nearly. "I think you can go fishing now, as long as you are careful", he said.

So the phone rang very soon at my friend Doug's place, and within two days we were on our way to the Goulburn River at Alexandra. We use a small dinghy to get around when the water is well up, as it had been for most of the summer. After all it carries irrigation water to the Goulburn Valley. 8,000 megalitres a day greeted us, if that's what you call it. At this level the water is fast, very fast in fact, and there is a lot of it. But the fish still have to eat.

Nobody has ever heard me mention boating on the Goulburn. My little tinny is handy for getting to fish spots that are out of reach on a normal walking day. However I will say here right now that this river is dangerous, particularly to the inexperienced. It can have some of the strongest currents as well as "deadly" tree stumps just inches under the surface. Hit one of these and you're in the water, and if you are dragged under the willows its Yibbida Yibbida.

At 66 years of age I have kept records of my boating since 1965. I have thousands of hours at sea, in lakes, and on the Goulburn. I am a licensed Coxswain and I hold boat driving licences in 2 states. I know it backwards, and I know it's not the place to experiment. But my little Savage tinnie "Tom Thumb" has been invaluable in assisting us to catch literally thousands of Goulburn River trout over the years.



Master class

Every session I learn something new about the river and its trout. I fished it back in 1964 and was lucky enough to meet Bob Gibb one day at the Thornton bridge. His first words to me were, "Did you see any?" I laid three nice browns out on the grass for Bob to see. They were humble little browns of some 400 grams each, back then just under a pound. He then trumped me with four beauties, all taken on a homemade spinner made from a teaspoon handle. Two were rippers over a kilo (2 pounds odd). Our friendship lasted 30 years till Bob passed away 1992. It was through Bob that I met Mick Martin, a past member of the VFFA.

Sorry gentlemen, I digress. Back to the story, if you are still with me. So armed with the Esky, sunscreen, drinks and some nibbles we arrived at the mighty Goulburn at Alexandra. Of course on the way we had gathered some refreshment at the Yea bakery in the form of the best curry pies in the world and that ubiquitous coconut slice with a coffee, all low calorie of course.

Doug and I had a wonderful day. I suppose we "touched" 50 fish. By that I mean they either hit, got hooked and got off, or were caught. I counted 23 into the net. Most of these fish were average Goulburn trout, both browns and rainbows, and averaging, say, 500 to 600 grams. There was the odd larger >>>



Well done guys!

one and a few follows from some big fish, including a brown of around 4 kilos that came at Doug's Tylo in the deeper water of a long pool. I have been fishing long enough, and seen enough trout, to know when they are big. Believe me this one was a monster. By the way a Tylo is our preferred lure: gold, 10 grams, red tag, and it casts like a rocket.

That evening a lovely fresh hamburger and low calorie chips were consumed back at Yea, and all the way down the mountain to Lilydale Doug and I reflected on the action and the mighty river we had fished.

It was a relief that I had got through the day on the water, albeit mostly sitting in a boat. But I had got back on the horse, so to speak. Without our mode of transport I could never have lasted the day. But it was a good day; a wonderful day in fact.

But there was something missing, and if you are still reading this I think you know what's next. I was expecting a text from a dear friend. It arrived: "Next Wednesday is looking good," said the message. It was from Choco. Mid morning I picked up my friend and we drove over the Black Spur and then turned up the Acheron Way and found

ourselves in Marysville. The little town is slowly getting back its character. It's starting to look very good, with only a few scars to remind us of the horror of just a few years back. The recovery is nearly complete with buildings and people everywhere. It really is a delightful example of rural Victoria.

We decided we needed some fuel, so a curry pie and a latte were consumed at the new Country bakery. Then we were ready to hit the river. We ventured down the Steavenson valley almost to Buxton and parked on the side of the road. A farmer was working in the paddock and when we approached him were delighted to be given access to his property. It's so easy to ask. In fact it's manners. The only instructions were, "Leave all the gates the way you find them". Basic common sense really.

Although it was far from hot, the sun was warm out of the breeze. We strode toward the river with great confidence though we noted that the river was a little cloudy from the rain the previous night. Other than that everything looked great. We stopped at a likely looking section. There was a fall from the rapids above the pool, creating a decent flow and a nice run along a steep bank. All it needed to be



Choco fishing the Steavenson

textbook was a bubble line. And bingo, there was one.

In the sunlight through the trees we could clearly see an explosion of midges and the odd grey caddis that the swallows thought were tasty. And yes there were a few grey duns popping, though not a rise in sight. But it was only three casts before Choco's nymph was barrellled by a feisty little male brown of some 350 grams. It was a typical river fish, small but lively. And boy did he want that nymph.

It has taken me a while to finally realise that, despite the fact that we all love our dry fly fishing, it is under the surface where most of the action is. They say, "Match the hatch". I say, "Match what they're feeding on under the surface."



A very young Rex



Choco with a typical Steavenson brown

We had a delightful two hours together. Two close friends sharing a wonderful thing - fly fishing a small river filled with trout. The final count was 14 smallish trout, mainly browns. But they could have been all four pounds each in New Zealand or the Eucumbene. The fish suited the situation. The small ones are just as hard to fool and cast to as the big ones. There were Stimulators and beaded Prince Nymphs with their white wings that seemed to be what the trout like in the slightly coloured water. There was a new Hardy 3 weight rod with a Rio 4 weight trout line that performed magnificently. There were a few radio "grabs" for my fishing show. There were some photos, and even a look at a Tiger Snake taking late autumn sunshine on his glistening coat.

And then there was the company. I do not like fishing on my own particularly. I feel the joy of sharing my day on the water with a friend. Through the VFFA I have some good friends who I am comfortable fishing and sharing information with.

In closing I think you will understand what I am going to write now. Life is a great gift. What you do with your life is your business. I cannot imagine my life without fishing. Since my recovery from my surgery I have caught trout in the Goulburn, Steavenson and Eucumbene Rivers. I have also caught some lovely bags of King George Whiting along the drop off banks of Mud Island in southern Port Phillip Bay.

The bottom line is I feel so fortunate now, having gone into hospital feeling very apprehensive about my future. Thanks to some lovely caring people I have emerged as keen as ever.

Good fishing to you all, and above all good health.

Rex Hunt



What Were We Hearing Twenty Years Ago?

Just recently Ross Frame, our very efficient and skilled typesetter at Spectrum Printworks, passed on a box of past newsletters, including sets all the way back to 1995. Here is a reprint of the report on the Christmas Dinner from December 1994:

Almost sixty members and guests turned out to the December meeting of the VFFA. Each year our December meeting takes the format of a special Christmas Dinner at the Swiss Club to honour those members of twenty-five years and more membership. The evening opened with the President (David Featherstone) extending a warm welcome to both members and guests.

Our after-dinner speaker was Mr Jim Allen, Managing Director of the highly successful Compleat Angler chain of fishing tackle outlets. Mr Allen presented a paper on the management of the Victorian Trout Fishery and the dangers of depleting the genetic integrity of our remnant stocks of wild trout.

Jim spoke of how Mick Martin was before his time in his understanding of the world around him, and how Mick felt there was a possibility of a secret and sinister plot established to destroy our trout fishery, and when we look about today one must wonder if Mick was not indeed correct.

Further, Jim's paper was carefully researched, and his selected articles and their source are reproduced here as the points and their emphasis cannot be better presented.

"Wild fish matter because they are superior performers in streams, lakes and seas. They have passed the tests of nature. They are true members of their aquatic homes. They function better in the wild than do artificially produced versions.

Wild fish matter from standpoints of biology, sound fishery management, and

economics. They matter beyond the value they hold for anglers by virtue of beauty or fighting stamina, or what fishing for them offers in relief from the human world.

Wild fish matter especially for resilience and stability of fish populations and species. Long-term survival and on-going productivity are at stake. Wild fish matter for the wholeness of natural communities of fishes and other organisms. They are often essential to, and indicate, the health of streams and lakes as ecosystems; that is, as proper homes for many creatures. If protected, natural habitat and wild fish stocks maintain themselves. And where damaged by human activity, they can often restore themselves, when abuse is halted."

"The three 'Hs' of fishery management have been 'habitat management', 'harvest management' and 'hatchery management'. The first two are natural resource management, the latter often not. Properly managing habitat and harvest benefit the self-sustaining wild fish resource. Hatchery management can create short-term fishing but (except in last-ditch efforts to salvage endangered species by captive breeding) does not preserve or protect natural resources and as usually practiced, does not improve resources, especially in the long term." (Source: *Trout, The Journal of Trout Unlimited*)

Role of Hatcheries

So what is wrong with hatcheries you may ask? Nothing, provided hatchery fish are not placed with wild fish. When they are, the following problems are likely to occur:

Genetic dilution from interbreeding; beneficial genes can be diluted.

Predation, as hatchery fish are often so large that wild stocks are often preyed upon.

Hatchery fish affect wild fish by hyperactive behaviour. Newly-released fish wander around like teenagers, needlessly attacking each other and wild fish. They have learnt to be aggressive feeders and not "station" feeders like wild fish.

Fish hatcheries cause water pollution from toxic disinfectants and nutrient-rich waste water. After stocking, human and wild predators (cormorants, water rats, eels) can arrive, resulting in wild stocks being depleted.

Intensive farming can cause disease, creating a "time bomb." For example, Atlantic salmon farms in Iceland have sea-lice problems.

So why do we have hatcheries?

People like quick fixes. Hatcheries are like a pill. The pain of declining fish populations is soothed by restocking, whilst doing nothing about over-harvesting or habitat destruction. Hatcheries are orderly, tangible and tidy structures, easy to work in. Going out at daybreak to strip a wild fish is too hard.

Hatcheries offer illusions of control and power. They supply vanity to politicians who like to be remembered; growth often leads to increased power to those who manage them. Inwardness prevails. Often, those who work in hatcheries lose sight of the purpose as they focus on hatchery problems.

In conclusion, wild trout are more valuable than we know. Modern thinking is to ease off on biotechnology and go back to basics, by protecting and restoring habitat and looking after our wild fish

with a management program that might mean bag limits and closed seasons again.

The Sacramento River Example

In 1991, a rail crash caused a massive fish kill in California's Sacramento River. It made world headlines. The railroad company paid for a full recovery program. California Fish and Game took the hard decision and endorsed a wild trout recovery program, with three years to fishing and seven years to recovery. No soft option of massive stockings. What would we have done?

Fisheries Management

So where do we go from here?

I was asked to provide "an angler's perspective." Well here it is, warts and all. It is not a representative view, but solely based on my personal experience.

Today in Australia we take the easy short-term solution, the lowest common denominator. This is reflected in such things as the national debt (tomorrow we pay) and education (gifted children pulled down). I think it also applies to fisheries management. Regulations are based on biologists' recommendations alone. This is not good enough in a modern world. Today's biology is yesterday's tomorrow! Trout tickling, jugging and the use of ova for bait are allowed. Bag limits and regulations need to be implemented on a stream/lake basis, not as a general rule. Some waters should stay open all year, some should close. The "cream" of our trout, the biggest and best, are "poached" when they are most vulnerable, leaving an over-population of smaller fish and hatchery-raised fish that have not made the spawning run. Some of Victoria's anglers have taken the law into their own hands and have imported ova from Tasmania, collected their own ova, used Whitlock-Vibert boxes and stocked their own waters.

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"Take a Walk on the Wildside"

There are biologists and "greenies" who feel that trout have no place in Australia. They are wrong. We are guardians of some of the world's finest brown trout. They are genetically superb and have great export potential. They are special. The United Kingdom and Europe have lost so much. Rainbow trout are the same story. There may be a few pockets left of old fish from California but in general they have been ruined by hatchery-bred stock.

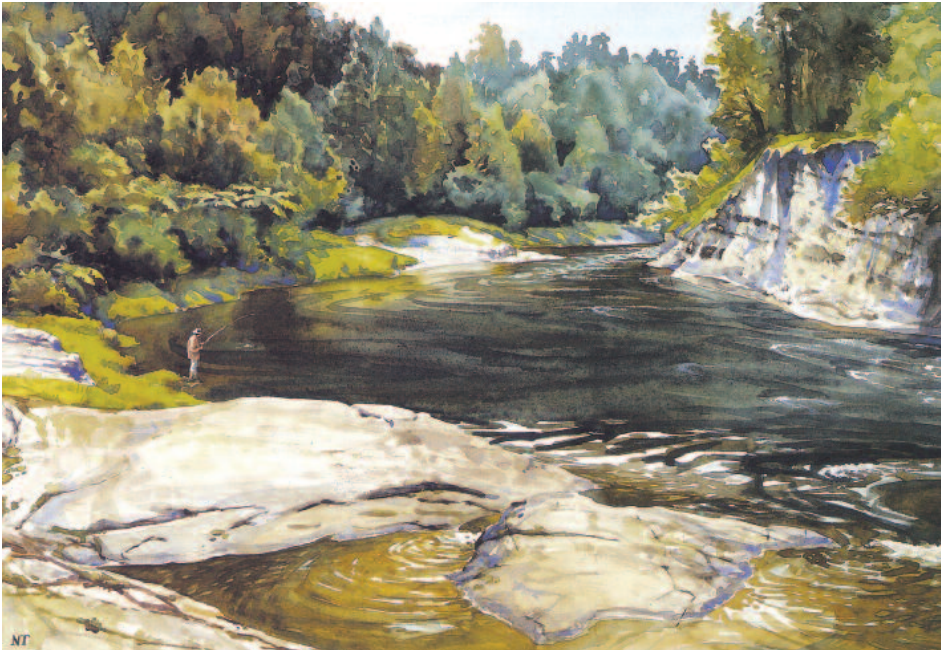
(The 1995 editor added: 'Jim's presentation was excellent and his delivery timely on a subject that is at the very basis of our sport and as members of this great "brotherhood". We must

continually impress both politicians and public servants of our needs.

And yes, once again Bert Tartakover took out the honours of being the longest serving member at the dinner. Bert has now notched up a modest 49 years of membership - Congratulations Bert.

And finally, a big thank you to the Swiss Club for putting on a first class dinner for us.)

So there it is. It would seem that many of the issues and problems are the same, and Jim Allen, who remains one of our esteemed and revered Elder Statesmen, was just as forceful and insightful in his opinions and concerns for our fishery in 1995 as he is today.



Tichborne watercolour – Ruakituri River

A Note From Our Head of Fisheries – Travis Dowling

Dear VFFA members, friends and families,

Thanks you for the opportunity to be able to contribute to your fantastic newsletter, and thanks to Lyndon for all the fine work he does and has done for many years on this great publication.

Well, winter is the time for trout stocking and we are getting them out there, as well as doing a number of other things we hope will continue to build recreational fishing in Victorian and deliver on the governments commitment to grow participation to over one million recreational fishers by 2020.

Shortly recreational fishers who buy a 1 or 3 year recreational fishing licence online will receive a plastic licence in the mail under new arrangements to be introduced later this year. This has been something recreational fishers have been asking for, for a long time and we are happy to make it happen.

We are also very pleased that a new three-stage project to enhance Konongwootong Reservoir's fishing facilities has started, thanks to funding from the Recreational Fishing Grants Program. In May, Wannon Water began the first stage of the project that will improve access to the non-powered boat ramp and upgrade the parking area off Reservoir Road.

The next stage will see an all-abilities terraced fishing platform installed along with a walking path and picnic shelter, before the third and final stage of works that will improve access from Nareen Road, develop new walking trails and install interpretive signage. The new car parking facilities and access points will make the reservoir safer, while the new fishing platform and walking path will assist all anglers, including those with limited mobility.

Stage one and two of the enhancement works are scheduled for completion in July 2015. The third and final stage will commence in 2016.

With help from recreational fishing licence fees, we have stocked nearly 116,000 trout into 15 waters during May to improve freshwater fishing opportunities for anglers:

- West Barwon Dam (3,000 rainbows)
- Lake Wendouree (8,700 browns)
- Tullaroop Reservoir (8,000 browns)
- Hepburn Lagoon (5,000 rainbows)
- Lake Fyans (6,000 rainbows)
- Upper Coliban Reservoir (10,000 browns)
- Lauriston Reservoir (10,000 browns)
- Bellfield Reservoir (10,000 rainbows)
- Blue Rock Lake (7,000 rainbows)

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- Konongwootong Reservoir (2,000 browns and 2,000 rainbows)
- Lake Purrumbete (10,000 browns and 5,000 rainbows)
- Lake Hume (4,300 browns and 7,800 rainbows)
- Barkers Creek Reservoir (2,900 browns)
- Pykes Creek Reservoir (5,000 browns)
- Macalister River, upstream of Lake Glenmaggie to Wellington River junction (9,000 rainbows)

Most of these trout were yearling fish that will grow to catchable size over the next 12 months. Trout stocking will continue through winter and into spring while water temperatures are low.

All good luck fishing!

Kind regards,

Travis Dowling

(Executive Director, Fisheries Victoria)



There are still some fabulous fish to be caught. VFFA member Milton Zeuschner was recently at Eucumbene where his catches (all browns) included fish of 8 lb, 7 lb and 6 lb. It was rather cold though in Eucumbene in May.

It's a Tough Gig

General Sir Percy Robert Basil Feilding, K.C.B., was born in Warwickshire, England, in 1827, and died in 1904. Among many other interests he was a keen angler, but like the rest of us had days when finding a cooperative fish was a challenge. In fact he had a comprehensive list of reasons why there were these difficult days. Apparently on one occasion he was fishing for salmon in Scotland, it wasn't going well, so he scribbled down his thoughts on a table in Upper Bower. (His reasons, given below, were reprinted in the January 2012 issue of the top UK angling magazine, *Fly Fishing & Fly Tying*.)

Reasons to Account for Want Of Sport; Written down on Upper Bower Table By Gen. Sir Percy Feilding K.C.B.

- The river is waxing.
- The water is too black.
- The wind is no' in the right quarter.
- There's a fog on the river.
- There's a mist on the hills.
- There's thunder about.
- The glass is falling.
- The weather is too warm.
- The fish have been too long in the water.
- It is too stormy.
- There are too many white clouds about.
- She is too big [‘She’ being the river]
- She is too small.
- She is too dirty.
- She is too clear.
- There's too much sun.
- There's too little wind.
- The wind is too gusty.
- There's going to be a change in the weather.
- The fish are not settled after the flood.
- The man at the thick end of the rod is a duffer.
- The thistles on the bank get in the way of the fly.
- The fisher is in love and not minding his business.
- The flies are too big or too sma'.
- There's too many leaves falling.
- There's too much grue on the river. [‘grue’ being ice formed in the water]
- There are no fish.
- There has been no spate to clear the rocks.
- There have been too many waxes and the fish are no' settled.
- There's a bad light on the water.
- There's too much snaw brae in the river. [‘snaw brae’ being melting snow]
- It's o'er gurdy. [i.e. the water is rough and boisterous]

So there you go – a very comprehensive list of excuses, if you're ever in need of one.

This Month's Yarn

"I'll tell you what", said Alf, finishing another swig of lunch, "It's been a bad season for snakes. There have been heaps of them along the Goulburn this year, and some pretty aggressive ones among them too." Dermot and Kossy nodded in agreement.

McTaggart looked pensive. "That's true," he said, pushing his empty glass across the bar and looking expectantly at Alf. "There are many ways of dealing with them I've discovered. I recall years ago fishing the upper Mitta with my nephew, young Clarence. He was quite young at the time, perhaps 10 or 11, and I was trying to get him into fly fishing. So I'd kitted him out with an old cane rod I'd picked up at a car boot sale. It had a broken top section but a bit of electrician's tape kept it together and he was young and enthusiastic and was doing well."

"Anyway it was coming on dark and I was getting a feed together while he was down at the river having a few casts. Suddenly he screamed, so I rushed down to see what the trouble was and found him trembling at the water's edge with a very large tiger snake hissing and raising its head and looking very angry. I grabbed young Clarence and raced him back to the tent and the snake disappeared into a pile of old logs near the river. But I realised I had to do

something about this snake, otherwise young Clarence would be very hesitant about going near the water again."

"Now I'd read somewhere that snakes can be charmed with music, and as it was only a week or two before a major gathering of the clan, I had my bagpipes with me to do some practice. So I thought I'd go down to the pile of logs with my pipes and a shovel and play a few tunes. If the music lured the snake out I would whack it with the shovel and all would be well."

"So I gathered my pipes and the shovel and we headed down to the pile of old timber, obviously home for the snake, and I got the pipes out. I warmed up and then played an old Scottish tune which I loved so much that I told Clarence I wanted it played at my funeral. I gave the snake three or four verses, but he didn't appear. Perhaps he hadn't heard it, so I repeated the performance at fortissimo. He still didn't show. I thought maybe he wasn't even there, so I very tentatively lifted a few logs away. And then I found him – curled up in a ball, belly facing upwards, several windings of his tail around his ears, and quite dead. I couldn't understand what caused his demise, but Clarence rather cheekily suggested that perhaps what I chose to play was indeed good funeral music."



FLY OF THE MONTH

Jonathan Barnes's Soft Hackle Dry Fly



It's winter, so we should be featuring some big wet flies for all that stillwater fishing we'll be doing while the rivers are closed. And we will too. Hughie Maltby's fabulous wet fly is on the agenda and all will be revealed in the next month or two. Like Richard Kos's Damsel Nymph Hughie's fly has proved extremely popular with members and friends, and Hughie's fly box is regularly plucked clean by anxious anglers relieving him of samples.

But if you will indulge your editor this once, here is a fly that could well be a real winner. Those of us who search among the fly fishing videos on YouTube will soon come across lots featuring Jonathan Barnes. Jonathan is a UK competition angler and guide, and his many YouTube videos illustrate his competence and skills in a wide range of fly fishing styles. On one of his recent videos he described, tied and demonstrated the use of a soft hackle dun for fooling difficult trout on flat pools on an English river.

The fly is basically a fairly generic dun pattern tied with a normal cock dun hackle, but with a soft partridge hackle tied in and wound through the dun hackle. The stiff dun hackle supports the fly on the surface, and the soft partridge hackle provides lots of movement and 'life' that is the trigger that undoes those finicky trout. (At least it does when Jonathan fishes it. The full story and fly tying details can be seen on his website at: <http://www.onstream-guide.com/sofhackledry.html>)

Materials for the Soft Hackle Dry Fly

- Hook:** Dry fly, perhaps sizes 14 - 18 (Jonathan uses a Tiemco TMC 103BL barbless dry fly hook, size 17).
- Thread:** Brown 8/0 Unithread
- Tail:** A few fibres of partridge hackle or fibres from a CDC plume. Jonathan suggests that the tail is optional.
- Body:** Dubbed pale hare's ear fur substitute.
- Wing:** One fairly thick CDC feather.
- Hackles:** Cock dun hackle feather tied in first, then a partridge hackle tied in and wound through the dun hackle. Jonathan uses a Hungarian partridge hackle dyed olive, but suggests that a normal brown partridge hackle feather is fine.

Tying Procedure

1. Wind thread along the hook shank and tie in a small number of partridge fibres as a tail. The tail should be about the same length as the hook shank.
2. Add some hare's ear dubbing to the thread and build up a dubbed body that covers about two thirds of the shank and is thicker towards the thorax. Leave plenty of room behind the eye for the CDC wing and the two hackles.
3. Select a fairly thick natural brown CDC feather, tie it in behind the eye close to where the dubbed body finishes using two turns of thread, and then pull the feather through the loops of thread until the fibres are standing up to form the wing which should be about the same length as the hook shank. Tie the wing in firmly with more turns of thread, including some turns behind the wing to make it stand vertically. Trim away the waste CDC feather.
4. Now select a dun cock hackle feather slightly smaller than the size that you would normally use on the size hook you are using. Tie it in behind the eye and take three or four turns of the hackle, with the first one behind the wing and the rest in front between the wing and the eye. Tie off the hackle and trim away the waste, making sure there is still some room behind the eye to tie in the partridge hackle.
5. Prepare the partridge hackle for tying in. Pull most of the fibres back from the tip of the feather so that they stand perpendicular to the stem. Then tie the hackle in by its tip and make two or three careful turns of the hackle through the dun hackle in front of the CDC wing. Then tie off the partridge hackle, trim away the waste, and complete the fly with a whip finish. (Tying in the partridge hackle is the tricky part of tying this fly, as the hackle fibres are delicate and break easily. You may need to make a couple of attempts at this before you are successful. Take heart – in tying his pattern on the video Jonathan breaks the partridge hackle on his first attempt).
6. If the partridge hackle looks a little untidy it doesn't matter. The partridge hackle fibres won't support the fly. Their purpose is to move freely and dance around on the surface, imparting movement and the appearance of life to the fly. Have a look at Jonathan's YouTube video to see how effective this fly is.



LIBRARY NEWS

All members should remember that the Mick Martin Memorial Library is one of the most extensive collections of fly-fishing literature in Australia. It is valuable in its own right but is a great asset to members wishing to expand their knowledge or who simply enjoy sitting by the fireside and vicariously enjoying the exploits of others. In addition, the library boasts a number of videos on trout fishing. Our librarian or one of his assistants will be available prior to each general meeting to assist members wishing to borrow books or videos.

The library is divided into three parts.

- Part 1 Books available for loaning to members.
- Part 2 Books available for reference only and not to be taken from the library.
- Part 3 Books bequeathed to the Association and not to be taken from the cabinet.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA)	\$70.00 each
Book "Geehi to Great Lake"	\$45.00 each
Columbia Shirts.....	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon)	\$35.00 each
Wine glasses and whisky glasses inscribed with VFFA logo, set of 6.....	\$45.00 per set
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
<i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie	\$20.00
V.F.F.A. car stickers	\$2.00 each

Members wishing to purchase any of these items should contact Hugh Maltby prior to the monthly General Meeting on telephone 0423 283 079.

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2014 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Bernard Holbery • FlyLife Publishing • FlyFinz • Hayes on Brumbys
- J. M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall • Millbrook Lakes Lodge
- Mountain Stream Company • Nick Taransky Bamboo Rod Maker
- Pro-Angler Tackle • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd
- The Complet Angler Box Hill • The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne
- Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

June

- 7 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 14 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 18 General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: Craig Coltman – Trout guide and champion Australian angler
- 21 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 24 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 28 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool

July

- 5 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 12 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 16 General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: Josh Bradshaw – Tasmanian fishing guide
- 19 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 22 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 25 Warrnambool Annual Dinner
- 26 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool

August

- 2 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 9 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 12 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 16 Sunday Casting - 10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 23 Sunday Casting -10:00 am Red Tag Pool
- 28 Annual Dinner:
Speaker: Philip Weigall – top Victorian guide, author, and commentator
- 29 President's Casting Day -10:00 am Red Tag Pool

September

- 9 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 17 VFFA AGM

October

- 15 General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: TBC
- 21 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm