

FLY LINES



MARCH 2017

March Meeting with Andrew Mossman

Andrew is a long-standing and well-known member of the Association. He is recognised as a highly skilled fly designer and tier, and is an authority on fishing the Mataura and other Southland rivers of New Zealand

At our March meeting he will speak on one of his favourite topics - the significance of fly patterns compared with fly design. He will give a brief history of flies and how flies tied to a pattern gradually morphed into flies that were designed to simulate insect behaviour. The significance of this is how it effects our selection of the flies we use when fishing.

Andrew will also discuss insect behaviour and how trout respond when feeding on any particular food source, and how this relates to the selection of flies and how we fish them. He will also cover the techniques and the gear he uses when putting all this into effect.

If time permits he will also describe downstream wet fly fishing - the flies, the gear and the techniques necessary to catch fish, especially when the rivers are in spate early in the season when the fish are often out of reach.

Thursday, March 23,
8:00 pm at the
Celtic Club

Andrew is always a very informative and entertaining speaker, and his presentation will be well worth hearing.

So, mark it in your diary – Thursday, March 23, 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club.

All members are welcome to join us at 6:15 pm for Dinner in the Shamrock Restaurant prior to the meeting, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking on Wednesday, March 22, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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Index

VFFA Office Holders	2	The 2017 VFFA Tassie Trip	18
Web Fish	3	NOE – Bairnsdale Donger.....	20
President’s Message	4	Rick Wallace.....	21
April Meeting With Anthony, Werner and Bo ..	6	Peter McKean – A Tribute By Nick Taransky...	25
February Meeting with Rick Dobson	8	One New Zealand Year	29
Editor’s Desk – Lyndon Webb	14	Outback Adventure On The Rangitikei	32
Australian Fly Fishers’ Art And Craft Show...	16	Fly of the Month	37
Ray Brown’s Tasmania Report	17	VFFA Meetings & Activities	40

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

President's Message

Well I hope you have all been doing more fishing than I have so far this year. One thing and another, including house renovations and then a bout of pneumonia, has meant the trout have been pretty safe as far as I have been concerned. That's not to say I haven't ventured out. I have, but more on that later.

Our luncheon meeting in February was a treat. VFFA member and proprietor of the Aussie Angler tackle store, Rick Dobson, was our guest speaker and he kept us entertained and informed with his many hints, tips and general advice on how to catch more fish. There's more on his talk elsewhere in this issue and it is well worth reading for those of you who could not attend.

Several members who did attend the luncheon had also been on the trip to Tasmania, which was once again a great success, even though the fishing was somewhat tough going. Everyone certainly had a good time and it was pleasing to hear reports that suggest the fishing has improved in the Apple Isle compared with the last few years.

I also witnessed for myself the improvement in trout numbers in Victoria during a recent visit to the upper Goulburn River above Kevington. I had been invited to attend a meeting with Jim Castles, Acting Riparian and River Channel Manager of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority and Geoff Brennan, River Health Project Officer with the GBCMA, at our member Tony Armstrong's property to discuss a potential in-stream habitat enhancement project the Authority is keen to proceed with.



In order for the project to go ahead the Authority needs local landowner support (Tony) and the support of a recognised angling organisation. That's where the VFFA comes in, and we have agreed to support this project which will be called the "Upper Goulburn Catchment Wild Trout Habitat Restoration Project". Funding for the project will come from the Victorian Government.

The project involves the strategic seeding of a section of the river on Tony's property with large boulders in order to influence river flow patterns and create improved habitat for fish, particularly juvenile trout. If successful, the project is expected to increase the numbers of trout in the river.

While there, Tony took me fishing, and though I didn't exactly cover myself in glory, I did take one small fish and saw plenty more, including several quite large trout. All good positive stuff.

Here's one for your diaries: the Donger Weekend competition with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club is on April 29 and 30 at

the BFFC's lodge on the Mitta Mitta River near Omeo. This year is the 50th anniversary of the BFFC, which began as a regional offshoot of the VFFA, and to mark the occasion a special dinner is being held in Bairnsdale on the Friday evening, with further anniversary events taking place during the weekend at the lodge. We are keen to ensure the VFFA is well-represented over the weekend at both the dinner and at the Donger competition of the Saturday and Sunday. There is more information elsewhere in this issue.

Before then of course is the annual VFFA weekend at John Pilkington's iconic property on the Big River at Enoch's Point late in March. John tells me the event is fully booked, so if you have not

already reserved a spot then I'm afraid you will just have to miss out on what is always a great weekend. Thanks John for your hospitality.

Finally, I would remind you of our next meeting on March 23, when long-standing member Andrew Mossman will be our speaker. Andrew has a wealth of fly fishing knowledge and experience and is an excellent fly tier, and I can assure you he will have plenty to share with members. Put this date in your diary.

Until next time, good fishing and tight lines.



Inspecting the upper Goulburn near Kevington with Jim Castles(left) and Geoff Brennan from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority.

April Meeting - with Antony, Werner and Bo

Our speakers for the April meeting are Antony Boliancu, Werner Birkner and Bo Nikolic. They are all guides at the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre, and at the April meeting they plan to talk about some very exciting trout fishing on the Goulburn in the last couple of seasons since the drought broke, along with their experiences fly fishing in Idaho and Montana. They anticipate plenty of Q & A time, so members are invited to gather up all their questions on the Goulburn and its trout fishing, because these guys will have the answers.

So - mark it in your diary – Thursday, April 20, at the Celtic Club.

Antony Boliancu moved to Thornton as a keen young fly fisher way back in 1996, bought into the business, and has been there ever since. He has guided for the past 21 years on the Goulburn River, and specialises in drift boating on the Goulburn and leading trips to Montana. He loves showing people another side of the Goulburn River, and his knowledge of where to find fish at all river levels is unparalleled.

He runs the GVFFC website and takes close-up photos of rising trout in his spare time.

He is an avid runner and loves to sneak off down the coast to surf when he gets time. Antony has two children, a boy Sasha (6) and a girl Ava (4). His wife Maree is a teacher at the local high school and runs a small photography business.

Werner Birkner has an abundance of passion and enthusiasm for working with beginners of all ages. He thrives on the challenge of working with people who have varying degrees of disabilities and/or learning difficulties. He says it's purely through working with kids and handicapped people that he has been able to develop a teaching philosophy based on simplicity and doing the basics well. His approach is all about making fly fishing easier and less complicated.

Once people have mastered the basic skills he can't wait to take them into his world of streamside, up close and

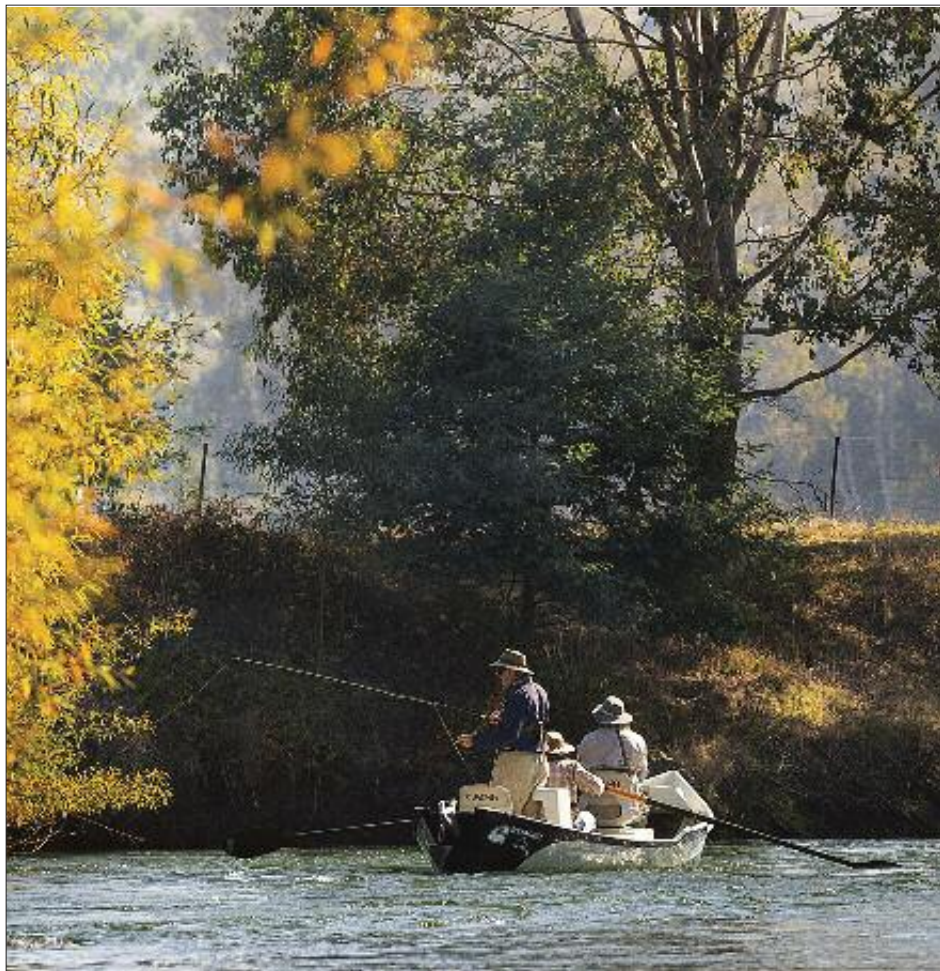
personal style of fishing for trout. "I find that getting people close to the fish works a treat when it comes to inspiring beginners. What they don't realise is that while they are trying to catch a fish, the fish is actually catching them".

His background working in Melbourne's comedy circuit comes out when he's guiding, as his sense of humour becomes evident throughout the course of the day. A keen fly tier, he's always looking at ways to improve or modify patterns to match local conditions and loves experimenting on his days off.

Away from the river being dad to 9-year-old Jed is his pride and joy, and with wife Sandra is heavily involved in the local community. A keen gardener, avid St Kilda fan, trainer of greyhounds, and partial to a spring carnival punt, he enjoys nothing more than a quiet beer after a satisfying day on the river - with a joke or two thrown in too, of course.

Bo Nikolic has been guiding for GVFFC on and off for the past decade. He became a regular fixture in the business in 1998 and has been guiding for GVFFC in New Zealand since 2005. He also helps with the Montana trips and is now a qualified drift boat guide after many years under the tutelage of Antony and David.

Bo specialises in casting instruction and his skills lie in teaching beginners and intermediates the fundamentals of fly



Drift boating the Goulburn

fishing. He considers himself more a hunter than a fly fisher, and can be often found out in the bush with his compound bow. He is also a talented musician (guitar and piano) and has an innate ability to make people feel at ease from the moment they meet him. As such he is one of our most requested guides.

Bo has two children, a boy Sasa (12) and a girl Tiana (11). His wife Virginia is now a stay-at-home mum; tending full-time to the needs of the family while Bo is away guiding.

February Meeting with Rick Dobson

The February lunchtime meeting was well-attended, no doubt because we again had an excellent speaker, and also because the lunchtime time-slot, whilst obviously not suiting members who work, has proved increasingly popular with our retired members, many of whom find evening meetings difficult to get to.

Rick was in great form – highly entertaining and full of very practical fly fishing wisdom. He spoke for well over an hour. Here is a summary of the main issues he raised:

Most of the things I will mention today are not new. Jack Kelly taught me a lot of this stuff 40 years ago. So it's a rehash of old elements, but there is nothing wrong with the old things, though perhaps today they come with a different twist.

There are a lot of things that are different as I get older. Tying on flies and seeing my flies on the water are becoming more difficult, and staying stable on my feet tests me these days too.

Here's a comment I've made a lot of times recently, and I believe it – I have never seen our state fish better in my lifetime. The fish are bigger this year, and there are more of them. The Goulburn has been particularly good. And typical of fishing, it's what you want to do. I know guys who have gone to the Goulburn and caught 30 or 40 fish on nymphs, and they were very satisfied. Others went to the Goulburn and caught just three or four fish polaroiding the edges - and they, too, were very satisfied.

So this talk is not about numbers and size. It is purely about doing things that will allow you to fish better whilst having a good time and enjoying yourself, whether you walk 300 metres or 3 km in the day.

Let's start with boots. Last November I got a new pair of boots and thought I would try one boot with studs and the other without studs, just to compare and reassure myself I was on the right track. I fell over in the first five minutes and this

was the start of a terrible afternoon. I was drenched to the skin and couldn't catch a fish to save my life. So that wrecked that experiment.

But thinking about studs, they need to be attached high on the boot sole so that they will grip on rocks. With studs correctly placed your traction and comfort and thus your confidence are all high.

Who has lost a fly box over the years? My fly boxes are now attached to my vest with a length of cord, so that if they fall or drop I won't lose them. I used to get very upset when I lost a fly box because I would have lost hundreds of favourite patterns, but now that just can't happen.

A topic important to me is the recent development of nymphs. The nymphs that I'm seeing today in our shop and that I'm also seeing in the fly boxes of competition anglers are flies I wouldn't have tied on five years ago. But these days I won't take them off. Most are big gaudy things. If I open one of my boxes of nymphs today you'll see lots of flashy oranges and reds, all very eye-catching. If you look in my other box, which has traditional patterns, you'll see lots of subdued colours. The flashy nymphs certainly stand out from the rest.

Now fish have to eat, and they have to see it before they can eat it. But who would have tied on a nymph with a silver bead head three years ago? These days we tie on flies with red beads and green beads



Rick in full flight

and pink beads. Craig Coltman told me some time ago, and he knows stuff because he's a very competent competition fisherman, that silver beads are great for catching rainbows in clear water. So I got myself some silver bead head nymphs and of course reserved them for rainbows in clear water.

But then I found myself in New Zealand fishing a brown trout stream where the fishing was really difficult. In desperation I tied on a silver bead head nymph, flopped it out in front of this cantankerous brown trout, and it came straight over and ate it. So now I know silver beads also catch brown trout in hard to fish water.

So I'm getting out of the mind-set of thinking that our flies must be regulation dull browns and greens. We need to think outside the box. I've been tying flies for the last three nights for New Zealand, and they are all tied with silver and red and green beads. That's all I will tie because I know they'll work. The moral of all this is that fish will notice them. As I've said to customers in the shop, if I am standing talking to someone and a small brown Smartie races past, I'll just keep talking. But trust me, if a decent-sized chocolate Lindt Ball wanders past I'll leave the

conversation and grab it, because it's worth having. In terms of trout, if a little brown nymph drifts past perhaps it won't even get noticed. But if a big flashy nymph drifts past then the fish are going to see it, and the knee-jerk reaction will be to chase it and grab it - because it's a big food source.

I've got here a typical selection of Victorian dry flies, and I'm talking about big summer terrestrial bugs - grasshoppers or cicadas. If a fish sees a big bug it's often going to eat it. A few weeks ago I fished the Rubicon, and it was very evident that when I smacked a big bug down on the water fish would hear it, look up, and in some cases move 10 foot across the current to intercept it. If instead I had put down something delicate and small I suspect that often it would have been ignored.

I'm holding here some of my dry flies, and as you can see they are indeed quite large. They float well in New Zealand in the fast water. Big flies float better, and the trout see them better. Splash something down that's big and they'll show an interest because it ticks that big food box. I've experienced this on many occasions.

The fishing in the Goulburn this season, particularly just prior to Christmas, was fantastic. The water was low and flat calm in late November and the fish were taking little tiny insects and were sipping very quietly. Now this situation called for a small fly. So I'm not saying that my big flies are the recipe for all situations; there is a time and place for everything.

And I don't get fussy about small flies. They have one glaring deficiency - to work properly they need an appropriately small tippet diameter. If you had fished those small flies on the Goulburn using a 5X tippet you might have caught some fish, but if you had used 6X or 7X you would have caught lots more, >>>

because the finer tippet allowed the small fly to move and articulate more naturally. So don't forget that important relationship between fly size and appropriate tippet diameter. When I go to New Zealand and use those big dry flies I also use 12 lb tippet.

Some 40 years ago Jack Kelly was telling me to soak my dry flies overnight so they would float the next day. Not many of us do that these days. Instead when we get to the water we put Gink or one of those other sticky agents on our flies. This makes our dry flies wet and heavy and bedraggled. It's much better to soak your flies in liquid the night before, then dry them out. Then when you get to the water your flies are dry and will float beautifully without anything being put on them.

CDC is a great material, but it gives people a lot of problems. To give best results CDC must be pre-dressed and then allowed to dry, and then don't put anything else near it. For CDC, and for your other dry flies too, get some of that drying powder that's been around for years. This stuff is great. I'm going to New Zealand next week and I've packed five tubes of it, and could well get through a tube a day as I keep drying my flies after each fish I catch on them. This material is particularly great for CDC – it pulls the moisture out of the CDC so that the fly floats beautifully again.

In our shop we have different varieties of this dry fly powder, but they are all essentially the same stuff. You put your fly into the powder, shut the lid, give it a few shakes, and your fly is ready to go again.

A point to keep in mind is that micro-drag is an important issue, especially with bigger flies. I recall a few years ago fishing a small creek using a leader that had a short tippet tied on. The creek was

full of little browns that kept following the fly but wouldn't take it. I finally realised that the tippet had got too short and as a consequence was causing drag. I lengthened the tippet and the line section behind it, and had no problems from then on.

When you walk up a river every section has a different depth, a different type of water, and a different water velocity. Chris Bassano in his talk last year typified this when he said that he would work a section of river very slowly and methodically, changing his rig to suit each situation. Take strike indicators for nymphs as an example. It's very common for anglers to place their strike indicators on the leader butt close to the end of the fly line. But if you watch a fish take a nymph you could almost count to 10 in many cases before the indicator moved. So moving your indicator up or down your leader to accommodate different depths and water velocities is important. The distance between the indicator and the nymph should be 1½ to 2 times the water depth. Changing flies is not a bad thing to do, too. If something is not working then change it.

I rang a guide in New Zealand yesterday. He'd had some Australian anglers with him last week, so I asked him what things Australian anglers do (wrong) that I should comment on here today. He suggested that a lot of Australians were not good at seeing the visual clues for subsurface strikes.

To confirm his observation I spoke to a couple of guys in the shop this morning who fish New Zealand regularly, and they said the hardest thing for them was understanding when a fish had taken their fly.

Sometimes a fish will grab your nymph and then turn, and in this case you know the fly has been taken. But on other

occasions the fish will take a nymph without moving much and there is no obvious indication, so the take is very hard to pick. To improve here you need to learn to trust your instincts more, and be very positive. Jim Allen said to me once on the Great Lake, "Did you want that fish?" I said, "Yes, of course." He responded, "Well you didn't strike like you wanted it." You've got to strike like you mean it. Be positive and forthright. It resolves a lot of issues.

Let's talk about waders. It's important to wear a belt on top of your hips, because this helps take the pressure off your shoulders. All full-length body waders these days are designed to fold down to your waist, and the top part is made very light for this reason. When they are folded down they are much more comfortable to wear, and you can walk miles further without getting tired. So get yourself a decent wide belt, and wear it on top of your hips.

Many years ago three of us jumped out of the car up near Mount Baw Baw and put on our waders. One of us was wearing a pair of heavy jeans under his breathables. At the end of the day he was really labouring and tired. He could hardly lift his legs because his trousers were full of sweat. Had he worn a pair of long johns under his waders he would have been able to fish for hours more and not come back a dehydrated lumbering mess. What you wear under your waders is important to your comfort. Don't wear shorts. You are better off wearing thermal long johns because they wick moisture away from your legs and keep you a whole lot more comfortable, even on hot days.

Vests. Who gets a sore back at the end of a day's fishing? We load up the front of our vests with boxes and other things that are heavy and this pulls us over all day. The important thing here is to balance your

vest so that the things in the back counterbalance the weight of the things in the front. So load up the back of your vest with water bottles and other items so that your vest is balanced and you probably won't have an aching back at the end of the day.

This is another reason for wearing waders with a belt around the waist, because then you are not carrying all that weight pulling down on your shoulders. The belt around your waist will carry some of the load.

Someone said to me recently that we have to find different waters to fish in New Zealand, because all the headwaters have too many people there. Now I don't fish headwaters in New Zealand these days. I want to fish where I can have a fair bit of the river for myself. Also, at the headwaters there are not many fish per kilometre. Yes, I know they are big, but there's a lot of water separating them. And those big floods wipe out all the insect life, and it takes time for them to recover. So the fish there are often underfed skinny critters. I would much rather catch a whole lot more smaller fish. When you go to New Zealand next go down 20 or 30 km from the headwaters and fish there. You will have miles of better fishing, with lots more fish per kilometre, and miles of more stable country too where the density of insects is heaps better as well.

I am a great believer in de-glossing leaders. Nothing new here – Jim Allen was doing it 40 years ago. People use to make up pots of Fuller's Earth mixed with glycerine. These days I won't put a new leader or new tippet on without de-glossing it. I carry in my vest these days a small square of pot scourer that I can use to rub up and down my leader, and when I'm finished it doesn't reflect light at all. So if you think the fish are being difficult >>>

and particularly spooky then make sure that you get rid of all that gloss.

Often when you are polaroiding fish in Tassie or New Zealand, or even here in Victoria, you find that you can be fishing along when something suddenly catches your attention in the distance. You then spot an angler that you hadn't seen before. But you saw him the moment he lifted his rod to false cast - because you saw his rod flash in the sun. These days every thousand dollar rod I buy I then get some fine steel wool and spend five minutes gently buffing it back so that there is no shine. I do this because I've been in places with guys polaroiding fish and a fish will suddenly spook, and this is mostly because of the flash from a rod tip. Often the tip ring of a new rod is shiny, so before I head off on a week's fishing I will Texta it black. My vest now has nothing on it that is shiny or that will flash. It is important to obliterate anything shiny - on your lines, your rods, and your vest.

A lot of us fish small streams, and we use short light rods to fish them. In regard to striking, we should note that barbless hooks will go in further and hold fish more securely than barbed hooks. Although it seems counterintuitive, you will lose less fish hooked on barbless hooks than on hooks with barbs. Often when you strike when using a light rod the strike doesn't really set the hook. You need to pull with your left hand to remove all slack then lift back so that the butt of the rod is setting the hook.

Getting back to my phone call to the guide in New Zealand, he said that approach was so very important, and that often visitors approached a stream incorrectly. This guy is a New Zealand hunter, and he's a very good hunter. He is very hard to spot along the river because he takes advantage of every bit of cover, and camouflages himself well. He catches

more fish as a result.

Another thing he said was that Australian visitors often played their fish too lightly. He loves to get his fish in quickly and then release them knowing that they're going to survive. He also suggested that visitors often used leaders that were too long. 18 foot leaders were unmanageable, and 14 or 15 foot leaders were better. An obvious problem is that on many occasions fish are reasonably close, so if you are using an 18 foot leader there is not much fly line out of the rod tip to load the rod for the cast. In really small streams involving lots of short casts it is helpful to have a leader of perhaps only 7 to 8 feet length.

A final comment from the New Zealand guide was that the fly selections of visitors were often too limited. Their fly boxes were filled with the traditional browns and greens, and the selections were too mundane and plain. More 'Lindt Balls' were needed.

These days we have lots of new types of leader material, and often fine diameter lines have large breaking strains. As an example, a new line of diameter 0.23 mm that we now stock has a breaking strain of nearly 10 lb. But sometimes we have a break off when we strike, so let's look at the knots we're using. I asked several people at the shop recently to tie some standard leader material onto hooks, then we tested the strength of the knots they used by pulling the line hard. Most lines broke at the knot fairly easily.

However two knots that I tied didn't. Why the difference? All the knots tied were clinch knots, and most had 5 or 6 turns. One of my clinch knots had 10 turns, and it was significantly stronger. Then for an even stronger knot I folded the line back over itself and passed the double thickness through the eye of the

hook, then made a clinch knot with this double thickness of line. This time the line broke before the knot gave way.

Of course in tying all knots it is important to wet them with some saliva and then

slide them back firmly so that they bed down properly. I'm also using those tiny tippet rings in my leaders these days, as they are very handy.

Many thanks for your attention.



Lake Wendouree Two Fly Competition

The Ballarat Fly Fishers' Lake Wendouree Two Fly Competition will be held this year on March 25 and 26. The cost of entering the event is \$50 per fly fisher, and this includes entry to the event, a two-course dinner on Saturday night and breakfast on Sunday morning.

All profits from the raffle and entrance fees will go towards supporting those Club members who are selected to represent Australia at international events.

The winner of the Lake Wendouree Two Fly will receive a Stalker Glide Fly Rod, total value of \$650, and a miniature Jim Thomas Memorial trophy. This event has become extremely popular and is now regarded as the "not to be missed" event in Victoria's fly fishing calendar.

Interested members should contact Chris Doody on 0428 304 004 or via email on chrisdoody@bigpond.com for further information and entrance forms.

Fishing Sessions are on Saturday- starting at 10am and ending at 4pm , and on Sunday- starting at 5am and ending at 12 noon. Fishing will be allowed from either a boat or from the shore. Trophies to be presented at 12:45 pm on the Sunday.

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

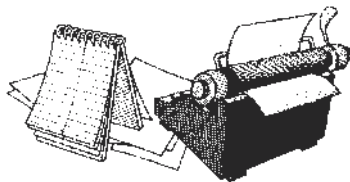
Entry information:

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

Show date: 13-16 September 2017

Steps Gallery, 62 Lygon Street, Carlton Vic

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"It is not a fish until it is on the bank."
(Irish Proverb)

"The charm of fishing is that it is the pursuit of what is elusive but attainable, a perpetual series of occasions for hope." (John Buchan)

"O, sir, doubt not that Angling is an art; is it not an art to deceive a trout with an artificial fly?" (Isaak Walton)

"Some act and talk as though casting were the entire art of fly fishing, and grade an angler solely by the distance he can cover with his flies. This is a great mistake. Casting is but a method of placing a fly before the trout without alarming it and within it's reach. It is merely placing food before a guest. The selection of such food as will suit, and so serving it as to pleasure a fastidious and fickle taste, still remain indispensably necessary to induce it's acceptance."
(Henry P. Wells "Fly-Rods and Fly Tackle" 1885)

The clear implication in these quotes by Messrs Walton and Wells is that the fly is important. It matters. I'm sure we'd agree. Rick Dobson was guest speaker at our February meeting, and he had a bit to say about flies. What he proposed was founded on experience and solid practical results – his and that of countless skilled competition anglers – but it had just a tinge of heresy. To explain, Rick was promoting nymphs that were gaudy and eye-catching and dry flies that were really large. Colourful nymphs work because they stand out from the crowd and attract attention, while large dry flies are attractive to trout

because they represent big mouthfuls of food. But the thought that lingers in my mind is that the whole point of fly fishing is to deceive the trout – to convince them that the boring little brown concoction floating past their noses, constructed of bits of fur and feather, is a real bit of trout food. It's supposed to be a convincing simulation of the actual live bugs also floating past that are the same size and shape as our forgery. We're supposed to con our speckled mates into believing that what we're serving up is a real meal, the same as the stuff they've been munching on all morning.

But of course trout are foolish and of very limited intelligence. We know that. I've seen them ignore a perfectly respectable imitation that I presented ever so carefully, and then rush off to bite on a lump of spinning metal that some feckless spinner-fisherman threw into the water. I mean, where is the sense and justice in that?

To add to my perplexity I went fishing the day after Rick's talk, racing off to one of my favourite streams up near Thornton. The paddocks were filled with hoppers – clouds of them leaping into the air as I hiked across to the river. It was a no-brainer that hoppers would be on the menu. But the hoppers in the paddock were small and the hoppers in my fly box were large, so the reactions of the trout were interesting. I worked my way along plonking the hopper pattern down. Some individuals rushed out, scoffed it, and found themselves being hauled ashore (then returned, of course). Others

charged out and smashed the fly, perhaps trying to drown it. Still others cruised out, then drifted down in the current for three or four feet sitting right under my hopper and giving it a very close inspection before deciding ... what? They didn't take the fly, for whatever reason. During the day I also fished some very respectable small beetles and parachute Adams and other similar stuff. These flies were totally ignored. So Rick's contention that big flies (my largish hopper patterns)

will get the attention of trout seemed to be confirmed. But then Rick's a smart cookie and a very clever and experienced angler, and I'm a paid up member of his fan club.

Rick also assured us that this year's Victorian trout season is proving to be one of the best ever, so get out and enjoy it. And tight lines,

Lyndon



This magnificent brown was caught by Rick Stuart-Smith, a friend of Greg French. Greg provided the photo for us. The fish was caught in a fairly inaccessible highland lake in Tasmania. It was 74 cm long and 48 cm in girth.

The Australian Fly Fishers' Art and Craft Show

The VFFA will this year organise and sponsor the Australian Fly Fisher's Art and Craft Show, which hopes to attract high quality entries from around the country with a first prize of \$5,000.

The show is targeting creative talents whether their skill is in sculpture, painting, photography, metalwork, woodwork, needlework or in any other kind of art or craft medium - providing it represents any aspect of the sport of fly fishing. This includes fishing equipment or accessories made by individuals.

The event was last held in 2008 under the VFFA umbrella and was purely an art show focused on painting as well as other types of figurative art. It attracted over 60 entries and was won by Tasmanian-based artist Pieter Zaadstra.

VFFA member Paul Squires is again helping to organise the show and he explains some of the changes in this year's format.

"Our previous show was very successful, but we wanted to appeal to an even wider audience if possible and hence the inclusion of Australia in the name of the competition this time as we hope to attract entries from every state. Although the quality of the entries was very high last time, we felt it was perhaps too focused on figurative art. The sport of fly fishing has generated exceptional developments in craft over many centuries. We only have to think of the beauty of split cane rods, hand-made reels, fly tying and all other kinds of fishing paraphernalia. We want this year's competition to appeal to anyone with an artistic or craft based talent who also shares an interest in fly fishing and a love of the landscapes in which we enjoy it including stillwaters, rivers or the sea."

President Mike Jarvis explained the VFFA's interest in organising the show:

"As a sport we are fortunate to have attracted the brilliance of artists and craftsmen over many years, who have produced exquisite works that capture or enable this wonderful activity. We want to help foster these talents in current artists and crafts people and that is why we are putting forward a significant sum as the first prize."

"The art world can sometimes be too focused on contemporary art and we are seeking to provide a platform where artists and craftspeople can showcase their talents, whether they use traditional skills or modern technology driven mediums. The exhibition will also be of great interest to collectors looking to acquire exciting new pieces at affordable prices."

Entries need to be submitted before the closing date on July 31, 2017, and selected works will be exhibited at a special exhibition at Steps Gallery in Melbourne on 13-16 September 2017, which the VFFA is hoping will be opened by a high profile guest. Information on how to submit an entry can be found via the VFFA website www.vffa.org.au/vffa-art-craft-show.



Ray Brown's Tasmanian Report

VFFA member Ray Brown has provided the following report on the much-improved fishing in Tasmania over the past season.

In the winter of 2015 we in Tasmania experienced wetter than normal conditions. As a result the Mercy, Leven and Esk systems sustained massive floods, and some 29 bridges were lost in the state's north-west. The Esk system fared marginally better.

As the season progressed into November, although the river levels were still unseasonably high, it became evident that the fish were there. The mayfly hatches on the Macquarie River were the best for the period I have lived in Tasmania. Even though water levels were a problem the fishing was superb, with quite a few fish of 1.5 kg or more caught and released. Early trips to the lower South Esk around Cressy were successful with numbers of good fish coming to the net. They were mostly dun or spinner feeders, though we did have a period in early to mid-November when the tea tree beetle was successful. At this time grasshoppers had not yet made an appearance.

We had a great day on the tea tree beetle in the middle reaches of the South Esk, though the beetles only lasted a bit over a month. By mid-December it was all over. We then turned our attention to the upper South Esk above Mathinna. We had patchy results there until mid-January and then the river really came to life. Any beetle pattern was successful, and days with 20 or more fish caught were normal.

During this same period we fished the upper sections of the North Esk around Upper Blessington. I mainly fished tiny spinner patterns because the hoppers had not yet started. The North Esk was producing good numbers of fish around the 0.5 kg size. Later towards February the North Esk was producing better fish on

Snowflake Caddis patterns. The best we caught were about 20 inches and most fish caught were in the 14 to 16 inch size.

Our last trip up to the Camden – St Patrick's area yielded more than 40 fish, all on hoppers. In February the middle reaches of the South Esk started producing good fish on hoppers too.

Around the Cressy area fish started on the hoppers in mid-January. Fish numbers were average, as was the size and condition of the browns. Water levels had remained quite high for much of spring, and only after December did they drop to a more reasonable fishing level. For most of the late spring to early summer we used mayfly patterns – both duns and spinners. Only after the hoppers appeared has the action increased.

After many years of very low numbers of fish the Camden appears to have made a recovery. The fishing is best when the trout are on the hoppers. Of late, however, they have been hammered and have become quite skittish.

I haven't fished much of the St Patrick's except around the Myrtle Park area. That area has fished very well over the last few years. In fact quite a few fish have been caught in the St Pats and North Esk areas that have exceeded 4 to 5 kg.

Overall the fishing season has been excellent. The North Esk and South Esk systems have both fished extremely well. Just think – we have another 2½ months left of hopper fishing. And the Macquarie usually fires up in early March and into April, and the Mayfly fishing should be truly excellent this year.

Best of luck, *Ray*

The 2017 VFFA Tassie Trip

Again this year an intrepid bunch of very keen and hopeful VFFA members headed to Tassie for a hectic week of fishing and socializing. The social facets of the week were highly successful, as they always are, though the fishing was again challenging. Some anglers were successful, with good fish landed, while others found those Tassie trout a tad elusive.

As for other years the base camp was Hayes on Brumbys. The photos here give readers a sense of what the week produced.



Hamish with another fine brown.



Hamish Hughes brings in his bounty from the Little Lake excursion with David Hemmings and Rick Dugina from the smoker.



Rick Dugina celebrates the maiden voyage of his new boat on Brumbys Weir.

Pre-Dinner drinks with Tasmanian guests on Thursday night whilst Hugh Maltby slaves in the kitchen.





Gordon Baker, Peter Hayes, Colin Morrison and Peter Boag up top, with the Great Lake in the background.



Tasmanians Mark Youngman, Ray Brown, Peter Hayes, Mike and Hamish Stevens, Andrew Braithwaite, Ian and Adam Dickensen enjoy a delicious roast and some vino with the 10 Victorian VFFA visitors.

VFFA Notice of Major Event (NOE), Bairnsdale Donger, 2017

Date of this NOE – March 1, 2017

Event*: Weekend trip to Bairnsdale Fly Fishers' (BFF) lodge on the Mitta Mitta River near Omeo for the Dudley Lee Donger fishing challenge between VFFA and BFFC.

Event Co-ordinator (EC): Mike Jarvis on 0418 265 390.

Event date: Friday, April 28, to Sunday, April 30.

Cost/s: To Be Advised

Event location & address: BFF lodge on Mitta Mitta River near Omeo.

Travel directions: Information from co-ordinator.

Accommodation: Shared lodge accommodation or own camping nearby if preferred.

Sleeping requirements: Bring own bedding and towel.

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Self catering for lunch and breakfast, BYO drinks, BFF will supply Saturday evening Dinner

Description of fishing areas: Mitta Mitta River and nearby streams in the Omeo area.

Mobile phone coverage: None

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

Fishing license required: Yes, if applicable.

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

Optional but advisable equipment when fishing out of sight of other participants: UHF radio

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to Mike Jarvis, 4 Munro Street, Armadale, Victoria 3143, by April 22, 2017

Date of issue of this NOE: March 1, 2017

Event Registration closing date: April 22, 2017

*The Event Registration Form (ERF) can be downloaded from the VFFA website or obtained at the next meeting.

NB: This year this event coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club. A special dinner is to be held in Bairnsdale on Friday, April 28, to which VFFA members are invited to attend. Details can be obtained from Mike Jarvis, on 0418 265 390.

Rick Wallace

I was just a young reporter in the Canberra press gallery and thus a frequent target for then prime minister John Howard's famously curmudgeonly press secretary's invective. I'd scarcely had time to set up my desk in Parliament House when he and I crossed swords over various stories I was writing.

But one otherwise ordinary afternoon, things took a different turn. I could see him approaching my desk and launching into the opening sentences of a tirade about something I'd written when suddenly a smile gripped his face.

"My dear boy – why didn't you say?" he blurted out as he reached my desk. He had spotted a series of fly fishing pictures I'd just got around to taping to the wall of my cubicle.

With that one break-the-ice moment, all our problems were put behind us and from then we traded fishing anecdotes instead of verbal barbs for the rest of my time in Canberra. I know politics is of no more than a passing interest for most of us, but I mention that story as an example of how in our sport there really is a brotherhood - or sisterhood - of sorts among us all.

It's easy to forget when someone drops in upstream of you on a remote trout stream, or refuses to say where they caught that nice fish they were so keen to tell you about. But isolated examples aside, we really are a tight-knit band in this fly fishing caper and there are very few pastimes that can match it with fly fishing when it comes to breaking the ice and forming friendships. Think about it – someone tells you they are a fly fisher and usually any doubts and suspicions you might have had about them melt away.



Rick with a fat rainbow he caught during his time working in Japan

I had another example of this in recent times when I was working as a journalist for *The Australian*. The former ALP senator John Black had penned a feature piece for the paper on demographics and politics – areas that are his professional speciality in his current career as a demographer. The editor wanted me to extract a news piece from Black's feature with a view to running it on the front page.

The sensitivities of the exercise became clear pretty quickly – rewriting the copy of a former senator and expert in his field while making the necessary simplifications involved in turning it into a news piece. And I'd have to ring John – who I didn't know at all - to go through what I had done to his piece.

Gritting my teeth, I reached for the phone to put in the call, checking out Black's website as I dialled. "Hang on, >>>



A magnificent taimen – much sought after in Japan

what's this?" I said to myself as I saw a tab labelled "fly fishing" on the former senator's otherwise demography focused website.

The first thing that came up when I clicked the tab was one of several nice stories he'd written about what I soon learned was his main passion outside of work. "I can spend eight hours on the water chasing trout and miss lunch and only realise it's getting dark when I can't see the fly anymore three metres in front of me," the first story starts. "And I won't have worried about clients or politics or chasing jobs or anything much really. It's meditation you see. And totally absorbing."

"Ah ... a fellow tragic – my kind of bloke" I said to myself, breathing a sigh of relief as the phone began to dial. When he picked up, I immediately turned the conversation to fly fishing before broaching the issue of the delicate

microsurgery I would be performing on his piece.

As it happened Black was about to lose mobile reception enroute to a fishing trip at Angler's Rest. But once he knew I was a fellow fly fisher it was easy enough to reassure him about what I was doing, and we've collaborated on several stories since. We've now made plans to fish together when the opportunity presents.

Quite simply, I think there is no other sport that's so useful in generating trust and breaking down barriers. You can follow the same football team as someone, have a shared love of cricket, or opera, ballet or classical music. But it is still too general. When it comes to fly fishing, being a fly fisher usually equates to being obsessed with fly fishing. I don't find too many lukewarm fly fishing enthusiasts. And you can't fake it. I think those are the main reasons we can use our sport as an instant way to bond.



Two of Rick's Japanese angling colleagues – quite pleased with their catch

There is one other important phenomenon that's come to the fore in friendship and fly fishing, and that's technology. Gadgets –the smart phone, tablets, big-screen TV, the internet – are often blamed for alienating us from nature and physical pursuits. But some less heralded technologies that have snuck in alongside these major advances are actually a boon for finding like-minded fly fishers and collaborating on adventures.

For many of us, our friendships have begun in the forum pages of *FlyLife* magazine, Facebook fly fishing groups and numerous other digital hangouts. I have people I have got to know from these places that I would consider friends, yet I have never actually met them. I know them from exchanging information on fishing spots and tackle techniques to make each trip as big a success as possible. The same goes for fly fishing and sites in other parts of the world, I have found.

Video hosting sites YouTube and Vimeo are great for people to post footage highlighting a particular water or species, although I have to say there a few things I like less than unedited and jumpy Go-Pro footage from a camera worn on someone's head.

At the other end of the spectrum is the work of Australian-born NZ-based filmmaker Nick Reygaert (*The Source* series, *Hatch*, *Predator*, *Leviathan* and other films), whose films have helped lifted the standard of fly fishing film making. Nick got in touch with me while I was working in Japan as *The Australian's* Tokyo correspondent and, after several conversations on Skype, ended up coming over to film a segment of his film *Predator* with me in Hokkaido in Northern Japan fishing for itoh, or Japanese taimen. I love the fact that other fly fishers can reach me out of the blue and make contact and we can collaborate on projects such as this.

Again, the shared love of the sport provides the reservoir of trust that makes such collaborations work. I think both Nick and I knew without even meeting each other that we'd get along and be able to work together on this kind of project, and that's exactly how it turned out.

While the internet creates both opportunities and threats for creative types such as Nick and other film makers and magazine publishers, one beneficial element to it, in my view, has been the ability to share digital images.

My most recent effort for *FlyLife* was a collaboration with Japanese fly tier Mitsugu Bizen that was heavily photo driven. Bizen is a phenomenal fly tier and has just as good an eye for photographing his work. When pitching the story to

FlyLife editor Rob Sloane, I was able to put a selection of Bizen's images in a DropBox folder and let Rob and photographer Brad Harris take a look. I sent off the email saying the photos were there and I am happy to say Rob went for the story like a NZ brown chomping on a cicada. "Brad just showed me the pics and I don't reckon we will need too many words from you," was his response.

Ego-crushing quips from editors aside, I have really enjoyed bringing some elements of Japanese fly fishing to the outside world through *FlyLife*, *The Australian* and through the VFFA. Quite seriously, it was one of the highlights of the four years I spent living there and it continues to help me forge new friendships today.

The most recent example is one of my favourite *FlyLife* contributors – top Tassie fly fisher and writer Greg French. We got in touch via email after he had read my pieces about fishing in Japan and seen the itoh fishing footage while doing the narration for Reygaert's film *Predator*.

Greg is just as resourceful a traveller as he is a fisherman and scarcely needed any assistance, but I was able to help him out with a few recommendations, flies and other information for his recent trip to Japan. He more than returned the favour recently taking me fishing in his own giant playground of the Western Lakes of Tassie in January (2015).

We'd never met physically before I arrived at Launceston Airport, but he was happy enough to take me out into the wilderness for three days. Again, once you get to the point of knowing that someone is as similarly obsessed with this sport as yourself, I think there is very little chance you won't get along.

I have had little experience fishing lakes and could have had no better teacher than Greg. For a start he knows every inch of the area (it's like having a human compass with you). We both love spotting fish and he's got a great knack for it. What I like just as much about his approach to fishing is what you might call an "iconoclastic simplicity".

He's the antithesis of the gear freak we can all identify among our fishing companions. He uses whatever tackle gets the job done, and he pays more attention to honing techniques that just work. He holds the perceived wisdom up to the light, and if he sees a defect in it is not afraid to discard it and develop his own way. Sacred cows such as mandatory inert presentation of dries are tossed out in favour of twitching the fly to attract the attention of a passing fish that's missed it. He uses dries to imitate frogs and other subsurface prey in the shallows purely because they work and you can see the take even in mirrored water in the half light. He walks quickly (he can almost break into a gallop!) when the sun's out and the spotting distance is greatest to maximise efficiency and the number of shots you get at fish when the clouds are about. Greg casts as quickly as possible on spotting a cruising trout, whereas I might have previously tempted to hold back and study its movements, because he knows it might not return for 20 minutes.

These are doubtless second nature to the best Tassie lake fishers among us, but as a greenhorn at the stillwater caper I soaked these tips up like a sponge and came away impressed with Greg's approach to lakes, as well as to the sea trout in his home of Hobart, where he has pioneered new methods and techniques.

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*Salmon fly tied by Japanese master fly tier
Mitsugu Bizen*

For me, there's something special in this, how great things and great times can grow out of collaboration among us. And technology – although it is often maligned – can be as much an enabler as something that distracts us from outdoor pursuits such as fly fishing.

We are a band of brothers and sisters and I look forward to making new online fly fishing friends and turning these virtual encounters into real-life friendships.



Peter McKean – a tribute by Nick Taransky

Late last year we lost Peter McKean, a wonderful rodmaker and equally wonderful friend to many of us. I personally will miss him for both reasons. I've been asked to write a few words on his contribution to rodmaking here in Australia and it is a great honour to do so.

I first met Peter at the Red Tag Casting Pool at a VFFA Cane Day back around 2004. I had heard of him by reputation as an established maker. I had just jumped in the deep end, quitting my comfortable computing job to become a full-time rodmaker. As the "new kid on the block", I had no idea how I would be received by Peter, or any other person already making rods here. Right from the outset however, he was never anything less than overwhelmingly encouraging, supportive, and helpful to me in my own rodmaking, right up until our last correspondence, less than a week before he died. It was always a pleasure to see his number come up on my phone, or see an email from him in my inbox. Similarly, I knew he was always there if I was stuck for a source of anything, or wanted to bounce an idea off him. With his dry sense of humour, it was always an enjoyable and productive exchange. Our conversations usually started with rodmaking, but often got side-tracked into his wife Ruth's latest victory in croquet, or the joy he had from a new grandchild from Thomas or Caroline.

Peter told me that he started rodmaking in the mid to late 1990's. As a self-taught maker, it was a steep learning curve with limited resources, especially down here in Australia (America being the "home" of modern bamboo rodmaking). The books on the subject (particularly the original Garrison/Carmichael "Bible"), are comprehensive but incredibly intimidating. For online help the internet was still relatively embryonic in those days. I have immense respect for anyone who has had to learn on their own. In an article written for the American "Planing Form" newsletter in 2000, Peter said that as an Australian maker he had still "never seen another person make a rod".

Core to the rodmaking process are the "Planing Forms" (long steel bars, used to form the accurate taper of the six individual strips that go together to form the completed rod). Peter was able to interpret the information in the available literature to enable a local machinist that he knew to make his planing forms. He said that it was no mean feat, given the fine thousandths of an inch tolerances

required. The machinist said that they would never, ever, make another set for anyone!

With his forms sorted, most other tools were available from the hardware store, or at least less difficult to have made than the planing forms. The only other thing required was ... Bamboo!!! In the same "Planing Form" article of 2000, Peter mentions Tony Young (then in Western Australia, and now I think in Tasmania) as a great help early on. I believe that Peter bought his first rodmakers grade "Tonkin Cane" from Tony. He then sourced further Chinese grown Tonkin Cane from Durnford Dart at Bamboo Australia in Queensland. These days there are several sources of bamboo, but prior to 2000, sourcing planing forms and the bamboo itself were seen as the "show stoppers" when it came to making a rod.

So from these beginnings, Peter began making rods ... for himself, friends, and others, including many VFFA members, by word of mouth. Whenever we spoke, though he was busy in his Veterinary Practice, he always had a few of rods on the bench, or on the list, such was his reputation as a maker. I don't know his total production, but I think that it would number in the low hundreds of rods – very prolific for someone juggling cats and dogs as well as bamboo rods!

In many ways, we came from the "Dark Ages" of bamboo here in Australia right through to when Peter (and a few others) began producing rods in Australia. Our English heritage had delivered us English rods - Hardys and others, and Australian rods were made in the same style. I do have a respect for these rods - they have soul, and a "swing" and momentum to them, but in many ways they are rods of their day. Long (eight to nine feet or longer), heavy (six weight and up), and slow. Meanwhile, over in America as



*Cressy Cane Event at Hayes on Brumbys –
Peter working at the lathe*

early as the late 1800's they had discovered that shorter, lighter bamboo rods (six to eight foot, three to five weights) made superb rods for stream fishing (like we have here in Australia). Peter did a huge favour to bamboo rods in Australia by making and advocating this style of rod. This alone is a significant contribution to bamboo rods in this country.

Specifically among the American makers, Peter had a soft spot for the rods of master American maker Jim Payne. The seven foot, four-weight "Payne 98" and the seven foot six, five-weight "Payne 101" were favourites of his. He also made rods based on the tapers of other noted American makers, including Everett Garrison and Pinky Gillum. Some rods he made faithfully from the original published tapers, but he also went on to modify some originals to suit his own

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Nick Taransky, Peter McKean, and Jeff Wagner

ideas on rod action, or to tailor them to the requirements and styles of customers.

So the tapers and rod actions, developed by American masters, and promoted and interpreted by Peter, were a great step forward in Australia. But what does a McKean rod look like? I have seen many. Taking the artists' view here, as opposed to just the anglers', I see "happiness". As a fellow rodmaker, I love seeing the work of other makers. Every time I've seen one of Peter's rods I can't help but notice, (aside from the quality workmanship), an overall bright feel, while retaining a traditional look. Peter brought out the diversity of colour achievable in bamboo, through mottled flaming of the raw bamboo. Lighter nodes, transitioning through warm, honey gold areas to dark chocolate brown - a full spectrum of life and colour. And his wraps - I've seen several colours, but his reds stick in my mind - bold and bright, but not ostentatious, with fine black tipping.

Peter's rods will stand the test of time. If you have one, cherish it, and don't let it go. A McKean rod, well cared for and fished hard, but with respect, should last a lifetime of fishing. Aside from the rods themselves, Peter has left an even greater

legacy. Perhaps most of all, he will be remembered for the many people that he helped to get started in their own rodmaking. I've lost count of the makers that I've come across who have said something like, "Oh yes, I contacted Peter McKean when I was thinking about making a rod and he helped me out". I know that he gave a lot of bamboo away to budding rodmakers wanting to make a rod, as well as a lot of his time and expertise, without asking for a cent of anything in return. In a craft where some try to mystify everything they do to try to "set themselves apart", he humbly put hopeful potential rodmakers' minds at ease with his down to earth manner. He was encouraging, and never authoritarian in his advice. It was always along the lines of "this seems to work for me", or "you could do worse than try ..." rather than "you should" or "you have to do it this way".

I should also say that his influence did spread far wider than Australia. Through rodmaking internet forums and emails I know that his influence reached to the USA and beyond to help others in their endeavors. In that sense he was a wonderful Ambassador for Australian

rodmaking, and Australia in general. I've mentioned already how much I personally appreciated his support and help over the years.

It is perhaps fitting that the last time I saw Peter McKean he was with the other biggest influence on my rodmaking, Jeff Wagner, from the USA, who I'd learned the craft from. In many ways they are similar people. Much to offer, but nothing to prove. Through Peter Hayes' and David Hemmings' "Cressy Cane" event at "Hayes on Brumbies", we'd brought Jeff over to Australia. I'd spoken at length to Jeff about Peter, and Peter about Jeff, but they'd never met. We did manage to get together, despite Peter not being well enough to get out to Cressy, thanks to Hayesie getting on the front foot. It was a highlight of my year.

Footnote:

A few weeks before I saw Peter for the last time, a friend from his university days called me, wanting to touch base with him, and seeking his contact details. In passing he'd mentioned that when they were at university together, Peter was a giant of a man who was an amazing sportsman - particularly at rugby - but at whatever he turned his hand to. Those of us who knew him know the physical challenges that Peter uncomplainingly overcame to make the wonderful rods that he did. It was a very moving thing to hear. In my mind, he is out there now, with Marty Rogers, casting a long line on a bamboo rod upstream, to a brown trout on station.



A few weeks ago Lester Walton was wading the flats at Fairwell Spit, New Zealand. He was casting to stingrays and catching a few kingfish, like the one shown here.

One New Zealand Year

(... by Kristina Royter)

I had in the past given some thought to being an expat – Dubai, Croatia, Japan...but an Aussie expat in New Zealand? No, not really, because as a fly fisher having visited New Zealand on countless adventures, it almost felt like a second home anyway! All of those pre-planned fishing trips, mostly to the South Island, brought only good times as holidays always do! But there was another side to making the not-so-anticipated BIG move to New Zealand.

Settling into a new work contract gave me the blissful accommodation of taking as many fishing days off as I pleased (or so I thought!) What more could I have wanted? Adam, my husband, and I moved from Lilydale in Victoria to Central Otago in the South Island in June of 2015. We chose to make our relocation in mid-winter to give ourselves a chance to settle in with as little “trouty” distraction as possible. The weather was cold, most of the rivers closed, and our little gas heater was enough to keep us focused on organising new driver’s licenses, utilities accounts, buying a new car, opening new bank accounts ... the list went on! Although I knew these chores had to be done, I hadn’t given them much thought. And the time I thought I’d be spending planning back country fishing expeditions, since this was now our backyard, was spent on the phone hooking up our internet connection! All this was a reminder that while I was in a new playground, there were other priorities to be considered.

We did make time to explore some new waters - systems we hadn’t had time to visit on our two or three week New Zealand adventures visiting from Melbourne. We were astounded at the



Nice trout Kristina

sheer volume of trout-holding waters and fly fishing opportunities just begging to be uncovered and fished! Our own backdoor lake, Lake Dunstan, had been mentioned in tales by John Sautelle, and, true enough, it has brown and rainbow trout dying of old age! There are just not enough people trying to catch them.

Lake Dunstan – more of a slow-moving section of the Clutha River between Bendigo and the dam wall at Clyde – runs along the highway and borders our little town of Cromwell. There are countless locals who sit on their boats trolling the edges with spoon lures while they drink Speights from their on-board “chilly bins”. However, we’re always surprised at the lack of land-based anglers. Lake Dunstan offers >>>



Adam Royter is a master angler. Here he has a typical South Island brown.

opportunities with willow grub feeding browns, mooching and tailing damsel nymph feeders, aerobic damsel fly chasers, gentlemen's-hours sight fishing walking the high banks, not to mention the morning and evening rises. So much water, so many fish, so much challenging fishing, and we haven't even left our town!

We did find ourselves in the trap of packing our truck – pride and joy Toyota Prado – and driving two or three hours every weekend in search of fly fishing destinations! We swore we wouldn't do that, having such quality water to fish so close to home. But we'd leave early, as the sun was rising, and drive past tens of rising fish in Lake Dunstan on our way to somewhere else! CRAZY! After all, you don't leave fish to find fish, right? Well, we were wrong! Because what we failed to remember was that as fly anglers our fly fishing truly is about the journey we're on, not about the volume of fish we catch. The journey and the challenges

were posed by those infamous South Island trout; harder to catch than they look!

We've met some wonderful people on our journeys to date, from Greymouth to Invercargill, all of which truly proved the theory that the South Island's southern hospitality lives on. Opening their homes for short-stays, just to share their little fly fishing slices of heaven with us.

From our home base in Cromwell up to three hours' drive took us to so many amazing waterways; truly spoilt for choice. The wondrous Fiordland; Southland, including blue-ribbon streams such as the infamous Mataura; hydro rivers and lakes in the beautiful Mackenzie Country; just to name a few. We have a back-country river within one hour from our home, where the big browns grow. They are few and far between in the Nevis River, and I am yet to land one of her trophies. But I have seen her gifts so rarely given up, and this



Another fine catch by Adam, and about to swim off

challenging river in itself is enough to keep me improving my fly fishing abilities just to have the chance to one day land the fish of a lifetime.

However, it's fair to say that the South Island waters we've seen or fished aren't all back country blue ribbon rivers, yet they all hold their own trophies in their own right. Never underestimate those little pocket pools in the narrow tributary you 'accidentally' stumbled across on your way to your destination. It was in a little holding pool that I saw Adam land an 8 lb brown after watching it sip spinners, leaving small rings on the surface. NEVER in our wildest dreams could we have imagined the size of the fish beneath the surface from the size of the rings it was leaving. A very pleasant surprise to say the least, and a thankful moment from the little river itself, just

because we took the time to get out of our truck to explore.

Us Victorian anglers truly are a resilient bunch. Our fly fishing rivers are a tough ask at the best of times, and they teach us to be skilful, gracious and thankful. These are qualities which in New Zealand's South Island bring many joyful experiences, whether a fish is landed or not. I am thankful that I'm a Victorian fly angler, because even though Adam and I moved to New Zealand, the fishing isn't always easy, but the journey always reminds us that the fish are just a small part of a bigger picture we had in mind when we made our move. No matter what our future holds, our first New Zealand year will always retain the tales of our own slice of fly angling heaven.



Outback Adventure on the Rangitikei

... Wayne Sanderson

During the more than 20 years that I lived in Palmerston North, a city located in the lower part of the North Island of New Zealand, I spent a lot of time with my family driving up through the centre of the North Island to the holiday cottage we owned on the southern shores of Lake Taupo.

Fly fishing for me in those days meant fishing the Taupo fisheries such as the Tongariro, Tauranga-Taupo and Hinemaiaia Rivers, across and down stream with a fast sinking line and a large (typically size 4 or 6) wet fly. I was generally oblivious of other waters near to where I lived and to other fishing techniques.

Since coming to Australia some 25 years ago, I have frequently returned to fish in New Zealand, initially not to the old

haunts, but mainly to the South Island. At least I have learned a few more fishing techniques and am now comfortable with both the dry and nymph.

A few years ago I decided it was time to return to fish other waters of the central North Island. This has included some of the Waikato and Rotorua fisheries, the upper reaches of the Wanganui, the Whakapapa, Mohaka Rivers and just recently, the upper/middle reaches of the Rangitikei, a river that for some of its lower reaches runs parallel with that main highway from Palmerston North to Taupo, a river that I had ignored as a likely trout fishery for so many years.

My good fishing friend, Peter Hobman, a past member of the VFFA when he lived in Melbourne, has returned to live in Cambridge, New Zealand. He and I



That's Wayne there demonstrating the delights of wet-wading

decided to book a three-day trip in to the Rangitikei Valley using Brett Cameron, a fishing guide that I have fished with frequently over the past 10 years. Brett is based in Acacia Bay, Taupo, and has guided extensively throughout the Central Plateau. The Rangitikei River has its catchment in the Kaimanawa Mountains, a little southeast of Lake Taupo, and flows in a south westerly direction to the sea on the lower western coast of the North Island.

We booked into the River Valley Lodge, a great eco-tourist facility right on the banks of the Rangitikei River, some 45 minutes northeast of Taihape. The lodge is very popular with young backpackers looking for a thrill and oldies alike. It is a base for whitewater rafting (there are rapids up to grade 5 on some stretches of the river), horse trekking, fishing or just sitting back and admiring the views. The facilities at the lodge vary from mixed dorms and bunkrooms to rooms and cabins with on-suites. Excellent meals are provided in a

large dining lounge that has a huge central fireplace for those cold winter days and nights.

On our first day we took a short helicopter flight to a clearing just above the confluence of one of the tributaries of the Rangitikei River and spent the day working our way up this beautiful valley, fishing the pools and runs with considerable success. Numerous rainbows came to the net, the largest probably around 5lb.

We fished with both a large dry fly and nymph dropper or, for the deeper pools, tandem nymph rigs. The going was pretty tough, having to tramp over fairly steep and rocky terrain but both the scenery and the fishing made it well worthwhile. I must admit, however, that it was a relief to hear and then see the helicopter come up the river valley to pick us up at the predetermined location at the end of the day. I would love to fish this stretch of >>>



Wayne with a magnificent Rangitikei rainbow



Superb water in New Zealand's North Island

water again, but if I did I would want the helicopter take out point to be about half the distance up river than where it was this time. That way I could spend much more time fishing the wonderfully clear runs and pools and less time clambering over rocks and boulders.

Days two and three were spent accessing various fishing spots on the Rangitikei River itself, by raft. Peter and I had been introduced to fishing by raft on a previous trip to the Mohaka River with Brett last November and agreed that it was a very pleasant way of getting to fishing spots that were otherwise inaccessible by land. While we occasionally drift fished and caught some lovely fish chomping down on the dry, most of the fishing was from the river banks and sides, again using either dry and dropper or tandem nymph rigs. As it had been on the first day, most of the fish caught were rainbows. We only caught one brown on the whole three day trip.

The Rangitikei River is quite variable in width and flow and while we kept away from the higher grade rapids, there were several occasions when we had to get out of the raft and circumnavigate the river on foot while the raft guide manoeuvred the raft through some fairly treacherous small rapids and falls. The weather was very kind to us for the whole period. It was mostly sunny and thankfully no rain. This made the rafting, and in particular the stops for lunch, even more enjoyable as the rafting guide set up the table with a wonderful range of food and drinks to keep us well nourished. The scenery is breathtaking. Many parts of the Rangitikei River cut through gorges with sheer cliffs of 100 meters or more, often covered in ferns or shrubs. The trip was one of those adventures that even if we hadn't caught fish it would have still been a wonderful experience.



Well done Wayne – another fine Rangitikei rainbow



Tricky water to fish

>>>



Setting up for lunch on the Rangitikei



A great way for us retirees to travel



FLY OF THE MONTH

The Cinnamon Parachute Dun, or CPD

(as tied and fished by John Pilkington)



(Members will be aware that for years John Pilkington's favourite fly, especially for fishing his beloved Big River, has been the old stand-by – the Red Tag. John has been tying and fishing Red Tags in various forms, especially super attractive fat palmer-hackled varieties, for as long as we've known him. But the Red Tag has now been displaced in his affections. Here is what he says:)

Last year, when down in Tasmania, I was fishing the Tyenna River just below National Park (a tiny township on the river). A fish, which appeared to be a good brown, was rising consistently in a lovely pool, and continued to do so despite my repeated offerings of the usual suspects. Increasingly frustrated I fossicked around and found something new in my fly box. It had a parachute hackle and looked very 'buggy'. Don't know where I got it from, but it was worth a try. On my first cast the fish engulfed it, then headed for the bottom and snagged me around a large rock that it must have known was there. I waded in and succeeded in losing the fly, breaking my rod tip, and getting a thorough soaking.

I tried to remember exactly what the fly looked like and tied up a few for future reference. They sat in my fly box until early this season when I found myself on the Big River and Red Tags, Royal Wulffs, Humpys, etc, were given the thumbs down by the fish. So I tied on one of those new ones - and instant action! This continued over more outings, so I distributed a few to Dave Wark and John Gill for road testing, and back came very favourable reports. The new fly worked well in the Taponga, too.

Here it is. Easy to tie and easy to see on the water. Try it in small, fast streams, and you will be delighted with the result.

Materials needed:

- Hook** Kamasan B401 (whisker barb) in sizes 14 and 16.
- Thread** Brown 6/0 UNI-thread
- Tail** Half a dozen stiff whisks from red cock hackle
- Body** Cinnamon (or orange) caddis dubbing,
- Thorax** Two peacock herls
- Post** Polypropylene floating yarn, oyster white
- Hackle** Red cock

Tying Procedure:

1. Tie the thread in and run it along the shank of the hook from the eye to the bend.
2. Tie in the tail fibres.
3. Tie in a length of the post material (about 2 - 3 cm) about a third of the way along the hook shank from the eye.
4. Spin some dubbing onto the thread and wind it on from the bend of the hook back to the post, forming a body that is not too fat.
5. Tie in the hackle, butt first at the base of the post with the butt facing the eye of the hook. (I double it over to ensure that it will not pull out when the hackle is wound on.)
6. Tie in two twisted peacock herls at the post and wind them up to the eye. Tie these in and cut them off, then wind the thread back to the post.
7. Wind the hackle down the post making four turns, then tie it off and cut off the remaining hackle feather. Then trim the post to size.
8. Finish off with a few half hitches at the eye and a little dab of head cement. The fly should sit flat on the water, so any errant fibres underneath should be clipped off.



LIBRARY NEWS

A note from our librarian, Rick Dugina:

Very few members are using this valuable resource. I am looking for suggestions as to how it can be made more accessible.

Please contact me on mobile 0401 963 601 or via the email library@vffa.org.au

I am currently updating the database to bring in some great first editions. This will be displayed on the website soon. I am also reviewing the old rules around the lending criteria. 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
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 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 •

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

March 2017

- 23 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Andrew Mossman
- 27 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 24 – 26 Annual Big River trip

April 2017

- 14 – 16 Easter 2017
- 20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Antony Boliancu, fishing guide at the Goulburn Valley Fly Fishing Centre
- 24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 28 Friday Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club's 50th Anniversary Dinner
- 29 – 30 Donger Weekend with Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club

May 2017

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Scott Xanthoulakis from the Flyfisher store
- 22 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM

June 2017

- 4 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool commences
- 11 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool
- 15 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: TBC
- 18 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool
- 19 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
- 25 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool