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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

MAY 2013

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

www.vffa.org.au

May General Meeting - Auction Thursday, May 16, 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club -

Our May meeting is an auction of the fly fishing equipment and other items from the estate of the late A.R. (Tony) Brothers. A catalogue of the items to be sold is included as an insert in this newsletter. As you will see, it lists over a 100 lots, these including fly tying items and materials, several fly boxes of exquisitely tied flies, a number of rods, lines and reels, and even a bottle of Mick Martin's Scotch Whiskey – signed and numbered.

All items will be available for viewing from 6:00 pm.

This auction is limited to VFFA members, so it will be a unique opportunity to purchase some quality gear.

So mark it in your diary – Thursday, May 16, 8 pm at the Celtic Club.

The Meeting will be preceded by Dinner at the Celtic Club, commencing promptly at 6:00 pm.

All members are invited, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking by 12 pm (lunchtime) on Wednesday, April 17, by –

Phone: 0498 254 497, and leave a message,

Or Email – secretary@vffa.org.au



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(info@vffa.org.au)

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The May Meeting – Auction of Items from the Estate of Tony Brothers

The May meeting, on Thursday May 16, will be an auction of fly fishing equipment and a variety of other items of memorabilia from the estate of the late A.R. (Tony) Brothers. A catalogue of the lots to be sold is included with this newsletter as an insert, and a quick perusal will reveal that these lots include display cases of assorted flies, several boxes of exquisitely tied flies in high quality fly boxes (we remember that Tony was a superb fly tier), a large quantity of fly tying materials (including a Jungle Cock cape and a number of Metz capes), some Hardy reels, several rods including some cane rods, various other items, and a bottle of Mick Martin 1984 Scotch Whiskey – signed by Mick and numbered #21.

So this is a night you will not want to miss – a rare opportunity to purchase some wonderful gear and flies and fly tying materials. The auction is limited to VFFA members so come along prepared to participate.

The lots will be on display in the meeting room from 6:00 pm onwards, so members coming for a meal will have ample opportunity to view and inspect the items before the auction commences at 8:00 pm.

And a reminder, all items purchased must be paid for on the night – either by cash or cheque. Credit card facilities are NOT available.



VFFA Dinner with Partners

Shamrock Dining Room at the Celtic Club
Thursday June 6, 2012
@ 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm
\$40 per person

Drinks: On consumption paid by individuals
Dress – Jacket and Tie for Men

Convenor: Peter Boag
RSVP - to Peter on (Home) 9690 1017
or (Mobile) 0408 711 946
By Thursday, May 30

April Report – an Evening with Fred Craker

This is the first time in my life that I have addressed this many people. There are only three fishing clubs than I have visited in my life – this one, the Corryong Fly Fishing Club, and the Red Tag club. I started at the Red Tag club with my dad when I was five years old. But I didn't go there because I was a fly fisherman, I went there with my dad to stop him falling asleep on his way home, because they finished their meetings so late at night. My mother used to make me go.

But I will admit that I started fly fishing when I was nine. I couldn't afford a proper fly line or fly rod, so I used an old Stewart spinning rod that my dad gave me, and the line was a twisted line, not one that was braided. You had to pull it out and Vaseline it in the sun, then wind it back on the reel. The reel was an old bait fishing reel, and with this gear you could only cast a short distance. You couldn't false cast with it because after two or three false casts the line would sink. So it was difficult to fish with, but this was also the best time of my life because I learned so much about our adversary - the trout. And I've spent most of my life studying them, and I still do. It would take me two years to tell you all the things that have happened to me, but what I want to talk about tonight is why I tie flies.

Now 80% of you fly fishers tie flies for you blokes. I don't. I tie them for that sneaky little blighter we call a trout. And when I go fishing I fish with one fly and I don't change it. I've got a brother who also fly fishes, and he has a good time when he goes out. But he would change his fly several times in an afternoon. I said to him one day, "Fly fishing is not guesswork. If you put flies on and then keep taking them off, how will you ever catch a fish. Why did you put them on in the first place?"

So I studied trout and their habits, and this is what I've been doing most of my life. In the 1970's I went out a lot in the winter months - not fishing for trout, but studying them, especially during the spawning times. I learned how the females would excite the males. I saw trout laying eggs in the fast runs, and it took me two years to find out why. This happened up at Corryong where carp had got into the rivers there and they were cleaning out everything, but the carp didn't like the fast water. I wondered how the eggs would get fertilised, but then I discovered that fertilisation would still occur so it didn't matter that the fish were spawning in the fast water.

Most fishermen that I know, or talk to, or meet on the water don't believe half the things that I tell them, so I don't push it. I have a brother who took 30 years to take any notice at all of the things I was telling him, and then only because he read them in my book. There are a lot of things to do with fishing that aren't 'knowledge' but rather are about understanding yourself and what you're about and how you do it. It's the same with our fishing gear. For many years the books I read rarely said anything much about balancing your fishing gear.



Fred getting underway

All I found was stuff about the size or weight of the line and the length of the rod and what it was made of. The books never actually talked about balancing the rod, the reel and the line. The other day on the radio an ABC announcer said he'd tried fly fishing, but after half a day he could hardly move his arm and he'd caught nothing anyway. Well, he wasn't fly fishing. I'm nearly 84 years old and I can fly fish all day and half the night, and I never get an ache or a pain because my fishing gear is balanced. This is a sore point with me. Fly fishing gear consists of a reel containing a line and a rod. If you put your finger under the rod butt at the end of the cork grip the reel and line should balance, because in the casting action this point is the fulcrum for the movement of the rod.

When I tried this out on my first rod it nearly hit me in the face because the steel reel was so heavy. I couldn't balance it. But I soon got a longer and heavier rod. Nowadays it's the other way round – most of the reels are plastic and the rod is heavier than the reel. I have owned reels where I needed to attach a lead disc to the back of the reel to balance the rod. The other thing that has to be balanced is the weight of the line compared to the rod and its ability.

But there is a third thing that most people take no notice of. If we lined all you blokes up along a wall we would see that you all have different builds. This means that everybody has slightly different casting actions. My brother and I look the same and are built much the same, but our casting actions are totally different.

I use a 7'6" fly rod with a 3 or 4 weight line, and I don't attach a leader. The old-fashioned way we were taught was this - you had a piece of cast with a loop on one end and the fly on the other end, and you connected it to the fly line with a simple bow. And that's how I still fish. The other thing my dad taught me (by not doing it) was to use strong connections. I always fish with either a 12 or 15 lb breaking strain cast. The cast I use is only as long as my rod when I am dry fly fishing, and two thirds of the rod length if I'm wet fly fishing. And if it is balanced with the rod you can be very accurate with your casting.

That is another thing I learned from my dad. When he joined the Red Tag Fly Fishing Club they held these Skish casting events where you cast a fly into hoops on the water. My dad won the event on the third year they held it. He was an extremely accurate caster. He used a long rod and a heavy line and he could cast it a long way. Another thing I learned from him was that when he made these long casts he couldn't see his fly. Now I'm nearly 84 years old and my eyesight is bad and my hearing is worse, so I cast short distances and I take four times as much care when I'm approaching the water. I can't see you blokes here tonight very well, and I can't hear you either, because I'm half deaf. But it doesn't stop me fishing; I've just got to change my tactics.

And that's another thing I learned in fly fishing. I now fish nothing like I used to fish when I first started, and I'll probably change again in the next 10 years - if I'm still here. I recently went up to my favourite fishing spot to check the water and see if the fish were about. It rained all the way from Bairnsdale on until I finally arrived at Buenba Creek, at the top of the Gibbo River. There are Atlantic salmon in this creek - up to about 2½ lb. I go up there to catch them but not to keep them. They are the hardest fish I've ever tried to catch. I didn't know they were in the river - I was up there one day fishing for browns and rainbows when all of a sudden I caught this Atlantic salmon, and didn't he give me one hell of a go. He went up the river on his tail like a porpoise and just tore the hook out. So I thought I better do something about this, so instead of fishing I went walking along the river, thinking and



Keen interest in Fred's fly tying skills

looking. The first thing I discovered was that they always sat where there was a log or a stump, and most times when hooked they jumped straight over the log or the stump. If there was a tussock there they jumped straight into it. They had been hammered by the bait fishermen using worms, and they knew how to get off. I finally finished up tying my favourite flies on treble hooks. They didn't spit them out of their mouths!

Now this is something I discovered about trout fishing. When I first started fishing you could go down to the Yarra and you would catch a trout on a brown beetle, and you could go to Jindabyne and you would catch a trout there on a brown beetle, and you could go down to Tasmania and they were on brown beetles there too.

I remember one trip with my dad when we went up to the top end of Eildon to fish the Howqua River. It had been a stinking hot summer and the water was that hot you could shower in it. And the fish weren't moving at all. You could see them, but they were just sitting there. Then it rained for about half an hour. I was setting up the tent when dad came running up out of the river yelling: "Come on, get your gear! They're rising!" I asked, "What are they on?" (because in those days the first thing you did was find out what the fish were eating, even if it took you an hour to do so.) Dad said: "They are on large brown things." So down we went, and of course there was Tea Tree along the edges and there were clouds of flies hatching.

We cast - nothing. We cast again, nothing. Both of us. We couldn't work out what was going

on. There were march browns everywhere – we could see them and we could catch them. And then I got hooked up in the Tea Tree. I pulled it free and as soon as it landed on the water – bang, a trout took it. It was about 2 lb. The old man was screaming at me: “What fly have you got on?” I said, “The same as I had before.” He said, “Gimme a look at it. Ah – it’s a female.” I thought to myself, “What on earth is he on about?” I was 16 or 17 at this time and I wondered how he could possibly tell. But what had happened is that when my fly had hit the Tea Tree the tail fibres had been bent and this made the fly look more like the larger females. The female march browns were loaded with eggs and their bodies were three times the size of the males. The trout knew this and that’s what they were taking. The point is that trout are not idiots and they are not dumb, and you won’t just go out and catch yourself a decent trout unless you first study them and their habits and their diet.

The biggest trout I ever caught was in the Eucumbene Dam just after it filled. By this time I was in my mid-30s and had learned a bit about trout and was sure I knew everything there was to know. Anyway, I went there with my cousin and when we arrived at the lake there were five blokes there who had been fishing for a week and they hadn’t had a bite. My cousin asked me when I was going to start fishing and I said, “Not until later in the afternoon.” He asked why, and I said, “Because the fish aren’t on the job yet. But if you want to catch a fish there’s something moving near that stump there about 8 feet out from the edge.” He said, “If you’re not fishing then I’m not fishing. So when are you going to fish?” I said, “Not until the sun goes down. But have a look where those ducks are feeding, because there’s a trout feeding with them. Watch carefully and every so often you’ll see a little triangle as his tail cuts the surface. He’s feeding on the same things as those ducks. They’re eating nymphs, and as soon as those ducks leave the water I’ll have him.” And I did, and it took an hour and 20 minutes to land him. I didn’t have nylon like we have these days and the gut cast I had was only about 5 or 6 pounds breaking strain, so I had to play the fish as easy as I could. So it took an hour and 20 minutes to get him in, and he weighed 12.1 lb.

It was nearly dark when I landed him, and by this time everybody was watching. My cousin asked, “What are you going to do with him?” I said, “This,” and I put both hands under the fish and carefully lowered him back into the water. Those bait fisherman wanted to execute me on the spot. But to me the fish doesn’t mean anything. I like eating trout and I might eat one a year. I know that I can catch a trout any time I like, and that’s not skiting – it’s just that I know enough now about how to go about it. These books I have here were written between 12 and 20 years ago, and they tell you all I’ve been taught - by the fish in the rivers and the people like my dad who took me fishing. We went fishing every holiday. I recall



Peter Boag presented our guest speaker with some VFFA publications

going on five fishing trips up to Buenba Creek, all around Easter time, and they were all similar – the water was dirty, the fish were down, and the weather was all wrong. But I still caught fish, though they weren't very big and they weren't in very good condition.

This box I have here contains my flies. It has 10 trays and each tray has 52 compartments, so the box holds over 3,500 flies. I never tie just one fly; if I tie a fly I have to tie at least six of them. The first thing I learned about fly tying was that no matter how accurate and careful you are in tying them there will always be small differences between them, and sometimes that little bit of difference is the thing that catches the fish.



Some of Fred's huge fly display

These flies of mine were all tied with some very basic bits of equipment that I made myself. The first fly that I tied caught me a 2 lb trout in the Toorongu River, and I haven't seen a fish that big in that river for years. There are plenty of fish in there now that are 12 to 15 inches long - if you're lucky.

When I started writing my book I decided to buy an old computer. I can't type with two fingers so I'm a one-finger typist. Originally the book was just one volume, but when I took it down to Tasmania to get it printed the printer said it is too big, so it got printed as two separate books. One of them is on basic fly tying and will show anyone how to tie flies using nothing very expensive other than the hooks. And I don't use fly hooks either. I use a hook called an 'all-rounder' - mainly because it's got a straight eye and it's a little bit bigger than normal. You see I've got awful eyes, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon when I've just lost my fly up in a tree it's near impossible for me to tie another one on the end of my leader. Nowadays I use two pairs of glasses perched on my nose to tie a fly on. So please look after your eyes.

In my early days I would walk along the river and hear the fish and see the fish in the water, and I'd see their actions and movements and this has caught me many a decent trout. I could see what they were doing – whether they were chasing one another, or looking for food, or simply just sitting there. I could watch the movement of the water and see where the fish ought to be. When it comes to understanding trout, it's simple so don't make it complicated.

You see a trout rise? I don't fish to rising trout - I fish to where I know the trout ought to be, even though he's not telling me. My dad used to fish to rises, and he would spend all afternoon fishing to a trout that was rising. Eventually he would catch it and it would be all of 8 inches long. And he caught lots of trout this long because most of the active things in life are little kids and little trout. My dad used to like fishing a white moth, and I've seen hundreds of trout rising to white moths but have never seen a decent trout eat one. What I used to do was put on a dusty brown moth pattern that was quite large. It represented a moth that came out later in the summer, and if you cast it in among the white moths you'd be surprised at what you might catch and how big the trout was that took your fly, because the little fish won't take the big flies but they will take little ones.

When we fished the Buenba Creek our best catch for an afternoon was 72 fish, but they were all very small. But when the Atlantic salmon were up there you might catch two or maybe three, but that's all you'd get. Another thing I discovered up there was that I didn't ever catch a male Atlantic salmon, even though I caught a lot of them. Every time we caught an Atlantic salmon there was a brown trout with it, and we thought these browns were males and they were trying to breed with the female Atlantic salmon.

I often fished the Corryong Creek, which is also known as Nariel Creek or Wheelers Creek - three different names for the same stream. The top of the Nariel is in the forest where there are no farms and some fairly deep water. Back in the 1960s it used to carry 3 or 4 pound brown trout, but every summer there were some policemen who went up the bridal track on horseback, fishing the river and getting some good fish. This happened for about four or five years, and then all of a sudden there were hardly any fish in the river. These policemen had taken out the breeding fish and the younger fish left weren't growing to any size. I haven't caught a decent fish in the Nariel now for quite a few years.

We were also fishing another stream up there at Corryong called the Thowgla, which was only about a third the size of the Nariel and full of small fish. But they've come from somewhere and there are certainly fish in there up to 3 or 4 pound. So don't go out and fish every inch of the water, but look for these bigger fish and you'll catch some good ones.

The fishing today is entirely different to what it used to be. When I started we didn't worry about how many fish we got or how big they were; we worried about how we were going to catch them and hang onto them. You hooked plenty of fish, but most times your gut cast broke if they are any size. But there were oodles of fish then, and there are still heaps of younger fish around. One of the glaring examples is at Noojee around about December or January, when you'll catch 30 fish in an afternoon from the Latrobe River. But they will all be very small, and it's been like that for 10 - 12 years. Four or five years ago fish of 2 to 2½ pounds were occasionally caught behind the local pub, and I would tell whoever caught them that they had just taken away the source from where the future fish were coming. And this has been happening all over the place.

It seems now that streams have different seasons to each other, and a different kind of food and hence a different kind of fishing. I fish a lot at Corryong, where there are five good trout streams. On the Lucyvale you will catch any amount of fish on a thin green grasshopper when the hoppers are up and about. You can catch them on orange hoppers and yellow ones too, but if you use a little green one you'll catch fish every time. You drive down 5 or 10 km and get onto the Cudgewa and find that the trout there prefer the yellow hoppers. You'll catch them on a green hopper but you'll catch five or six times as many on the yellow one. Then you can go around to the Thowgla and you'll catch them there on a brown-grey grasshopper. And this is what's happening on all the streams, even though they are perhaps only a few kilometres apart. Their seasons and their insects are different. So our fly fishing is changing because the seasons are changing, because, as my records show, the weather and climate have changed.

Ross Jordan – a Tribute

Ross Jordan – 7/11/1951 – 18/4/2013

It is very sad to report that Ross Jordan, one of our VFFA members, passed away in April. Ross joined the VFFA in 2009. He was a very fine fly fisherman and fly caster, and was a regular member of the Southern Fly Fishers' Brunn Shield team in the 1970s and 1980s. He fished New Zealand and Tasmania regularly, and Dick Clark fished with him about 12 months ago in the Kiewa, Mitta Mitta and Bundarra rivers.

The following note was provided by his wife, Lynne Jordan:

“Ross was first diagnosed with lymphoma of the brain in April 2012. He achieved remission in July 2012, but unfortunately the tumour returned in early March this year. He contracted pneumonia and this led to his sudden death on April 18.

Ross was a chartered accountant by profession, starting his career in the seventies with Pricewater Coopers. During his time he had the opportunity to work and live in both Papua New Guinea and in London. He then joined the Ford Motor Company's audit office in the mid 1980's, again providing him with the opportunity to travel and to live in both New Zealand and Detroit, USA. He met his Scottish wife Lynne in 1996 whilst living in Detroit, and they married in 1997 and returned to Melbourne in December 1998.

Ross had many hobbies: golf, jazz guitar, squash, and of course fly fishing. His passion for all things fishing started when he was very young and he was an eager participant at Southern Fly Fisher club events. He also enjoyed many casting competitions. His world travels enabled him to fish in many places and to make friends as a result. He was fortunate enough to fish for salmon in both Scotland and Alaska.



It was in New Zealand that he had one of his greatest fishing adventures, pulling the magnificent rainbow trout shown here from one of New Zealand's lakes. He also found a common bond with his father-in-law who, too, is a keen fly fisher. This resulted in Ross proudly showing off the finest fishing that Victoria and Tasmania had to offer to his father in law. Until recently Ross owned a shack at the Great Lakes in Tassie, where he spent many great holidays and enjoyed the companionship of his many friends.”

We wish Lynne and all other members of Ross's family, and his friends, our condolences and deep sympathy at this sad time.

President's Message

The April General Meeting was a most enjoyable night. There were about 30 Members who dined at the Celtic Club prior to hearing an extremely entertaining and interesting talk by Fred Craker (see detailed report in this Newsletter). Fred has also offered to speak on another occasion, as he could have held our attention for much, much longer than the time allowed on the night. Fred, we will definitely have you back on another occasion.

For those members who are interested, Fred has written and self-published three books relating to fly-fishing. The VFFA is in the process of purchasing a set to include in our library. I recommend the purchase of these volumes.



Whilst still on the topic of the April meeting, during the departure of a group of about a dozen members from the Celtic Club at the conclusion of the night's events, one of our respected 50 Year Members, Bruce Whitehead, collapsed to the pavement outside the Club. All present were extremely concerned. Hamish Hughes and Hughie Maltby immediately took control of the situation, as trained First Aid Officers, and tended to Bruce prior to the arrival of Police and Ambulance. Bruce was dispatched by ambulance to hospital, accompanied by Hughie. According to his doctor, Bruce's episode was triggered by a drop in his blood pressure. This has now been rectified by a change in his medication, and I am happy to report that Bruce is again fighting fit.

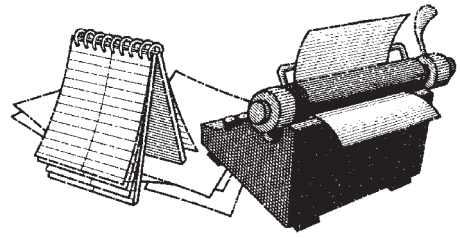
I spoke with him a couple of days after the event and he wished to assure all present that the episode had nothing to do with the very tasty Guinness Pie he dined on, nor the small amount of Red Grape Juice he used to wash down the pie. On a more serious note, Bruce wishes to thank Hamish and Hughie for their expertise in taking control of the situation and looking after his comfort and wellbeing prior to the arrival of the Ambulance.

At our most recent VFFA Council meeting, on April 24, the Treasurer tabled a list of outstanding Membership Dues owed to the Association. The total amount owing is in excess of \$6,000, all of which is now more than 90 days overdue. If you are one of the delinquent members who has overlooked paying your subscription, for whatever reason, I would request that you rectify this situation immediately to avoid any embarrassment that might be caused through the Association having to pressure members for payment of outstanding subscriptions. Thank you in anticipation for your immediate rectification of this situation.

The Association will again hold an auction at our next meeting, on Thursday May 16, at the Celtic Club, commencing at 8:00pm. The catalogue for the auction is enclosed with this newsletter. Most of the items being auctioned are from the estate of Tony Brothers and include a wide range of items; not just of fishing equipment as such. I look forward to seeing you there.

Best wishes, *Terry Rogers* (President)

From the EDITOR'S DESK



From Ernest Schwiebert: “Everything about our sport is beautiful ... Our methods of fishing are beautiful. It’s artifacts of rods and beautifully machined reels are beautiful. It’s wading staffs and landing nets and split-willow creels are beautiful ... The delicate artifice of dressing flies is beautiful... Our sport is awash in such things...”

At the May meeting Tony Brothers’ equipment will be auctioned, and members will have a priceless opportunity (no pun intended) to acquire some more of these beautiful things. After all, fly fishing is an acquisitive business, or at least it is for me. When I started fly fishing seriously in the 1970s I was living in Warrnambool, which has some excellent trout streams nearby. In the summer months, with daylight saving, I could have dinner with the family, put the kids to bed, and with a 15 minute drive be fishing the evening rise on the Mount Emu with plenty of the day left. On a good Saturday I could squeeze in the lot – family shopping, mow the lawns, wash the car, daughter to netball, and still manage a couple of delightful hours on the Merri before the afternoon expired. Those were the days. And we travelled fairly light too. A well-known member of the local club was known to head up the river with his rod and line and three spare flies in a matchbox. I kept a rod and a pair of thigh boots in the car boot, and not too much else was taken on board when I went out for some trouting. Because it was all so close and accessible, when conditions were right and the word went around that they were on, I would be out on a stream three or four times a week. There’s a lot to be said for living close to good fishing.

But then in the 1980s we uprooted and moved back to Melbourne, where I soon discovered that a typical fishing expedition had two hours driving at the start and another two at the end. So catching a few trout was an all-day affair, and with the general busyness of life my fishing sadly became a fairly occasional event. So when the itch took hold an obvious prophylactic was to visit one of the local tackle stores and check out the latest gizmos and gear, twitch a rod or two, inspect the fly tying materials, and invariably come away with something that simply couldn’t be done without. After all, if you spend time in these places and occupy the attention of sales staff, picking their brains for the latest ideas and reports, the least you can do is allow them a couple of entries on the cash register. Thus the stockpiling of accoutrements and appliances and bits and pieces gained momentum. And I know I’m not the only culprit.

A compatriot tells how one well-known Melbourne tackle retailer used to run two sets of receipt books – one showing the actual price paid for gear and the other being the receipt to be shown to the wife. And a very prominent VFFA member informs me that he hides all his new cane rods under the marital bed – alongside his wife’s recent acquisitions of shoes and clothing. This leads to some nicely balanced negotiations and discussions on spousal spending habits.

Let's admit it, aside from actually catching a fish there's nothing quite like the pleasure of trying out a new rod, or line, or reel. And a new book, or the latest fly fishing DVD, will bring hours of relaxing pleasure.

Tony Brothers spent a lifetime accumulating a superb collection of fine fishing equipment. His family are very comfortable with the idea that these items will be shared among his many friends in the VFFA. So check the catalogue – there's sure to be a number of things listed there that you would find absolutely essential.

Tight lines, *Lyndon Webb*

Cane Makers Day – Saturday June 15

The Cane Makers day will be held again at Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club (Melways 184 F5) from around 10am till 3pm. This event is for the makers, both old and new and those who aspire to become makers and wish to learn a few things.

If you have an interest in making cane rods, or in knowing how they are made, then this is an event you would not want to miss.

This event is catered and free of charge, so come along and participate. If you know anglers who are makers or owners of cane rods, please pass on this information so that they can enjoy the company of like-minded fly fishers.

Big VFFA Cane Day - Sunday June 16

Members are reminded that our annual Cane Day is on-

Sunday, June 16, 9:00 am to 3:30 pm

At the Red Tag Pool, Yarrabend Park, Fairfield (Melway's reference 2D H2)

The VFFA will provide a BBQ lunch and refreshments. Rod Makers will be in attendance, along with a cast of thousands.

So come along and cast with the new rods and compare them with the gems of the past. Unwrap your dear old friend and bring it along to meet the new boys on the block.



“IT’S ALL ABOUT THE CANE”

Red Tag Pool is an all weather venue, so bring along a raincoat in case the weather is damp.

For all details please contact Bernard Holbery on 0432 023 502

or email rlozupone@bigpond.com

Jason Garrett's Response to Jim Allen's Letter

(Jason is a well-known Tasmanian fly fishing identity. He was the owner and manager of the fabulous London Lakes Trout Fishing Complex and is currently Captain of the Australian Fly Fishing Team that is competing in Norway later this year. Jason was invited to add his thoughts on Jim Allen's call to put some pressure on for a better Tasmanian trout fishery.)

It is a pleasure to accept Jim Allen's challenge for Tasmanian anglers to put pressure on the Tasmanian Government Departments. Many anglers who have a love and respect for the Tasmanian trout fishery have long decried our Government, our bureaucrats, our public servants, our fishery Ministers, The Hydro, and even The Inland Fisheries for what they perceive to be the decline of our inland waterways and its precious inhabitants, the brown trout.

In taking up this challenge I hope to show you that the problem is far more widespread than the above and each and every one of us may be to blame in one way or another. It would be irresponsible of me to spread the blame without offering my own solutions. I have chosen to discuss only two of the many Tasmanian waterways that need attention and hopefully this will inspire anglers to take every opportunity to advocate action for the betterment of other waters.

It is my opinion that there are three components of the Tasmanian community that must adopt a fresh approach to lift our freshwater fishery to the status it deserves.

1. The Government
2. The Inland Fisheries Service
3. The Anglers

The Government.

By Government I include all those areas such as Members of Parliament, the berated bureaucrats and Electricity Producers. There is only one person who has the power to change the stagnancy of the past, one person who can inspire this State and restore a once famous inland fishery - that person is, of course, the Premier of Tasmania. No one would doubt the ideals of the current Deputy Premier and Minister for Inland Fisheries, the Hon Bryan Green MP, himself an avid angler, but powerless without the nod from his Premier.

We need to get lucky and have a Premier who will do for the inland fishery what ex-Premier Paul Lennon did for the racing industry. 'Big Red' found \$30M to improve just one racing complex in Tasmania; then was responsible for funding major improvements to two other racetracks. We should not accept the suggestion that sort of money cannot be found to restore one of Tasmania's angling icons of the past to its former glory: the Shannon Lagoon.

Through a combination of being a long time member of Fly Fish Australia, representing that organization in world fly fishing championships and having some thirty years' experience in marketing Tasmania's fishery to international anglers, I have been fortunate to have fished many of the best trout waters in the world. I have seen nothing, absolutely nothing, in all of those countries that might compare with my memories of fishing the Shannon Rise. It was the greatest fly fishing phenomena imaginable; my memories of this will never fade.

The Shannon Lagoon, the source of the trout that created the internationally famous "Shannon

Rise,” was, and should still be, the Holy Grail in the history of the Tasmanian trout fishery. There is but one way to rectify the turbidity problems of the Shannon Lagoon. FLUSH IT. Funny little ideas about macadamizing adjacent roadways, building buffer islands to reduce wave action, draining the lake, baking its bottom, dozing up the silt, planting grasses, raising the level ... will not in a hundred years solve the problem.

For too long anglers have accepted the electricity provider saying to flush the lake would be too expensive in lost revenue to the State. Let us not blame the power maker as in the past; let us take a fresh approach and demand the Premier take a stance in the interests of restoring the international reputation of Tasmania as a great brown trout fishery. At the same time the Premier would be giving some inspiration to Tasmania’s flagging tourism industry.

Angling is the most popular individual sport in the world. There have been more books written on fly fishing alone than for any other sport. Why is it then that Tasmania having the potential to be one of the great fly fishing countries in the world gets so little support from our Government?

What was the cost to Tasmania in lost power for not building the Franklin dam? Certainly far more than \$40M. The “greens” won their battle by public protest and the support of a Prime Minister. Perhaps we should protest and win the support of our Premier. I find it hard to reconcile that to flush the Shannon Lagoon would cause an annual revenue loss to the Hydro of \$40M per year. If we consider the vast volumes of water flowing through the Poatina turbines and compare this with the minimal flow that would be required to flush the Shannon Lagoon, why are not Hydro profits much larger? The starting point to establishing the facts in respect of this issue could be an external investigation of the true loss of revenue to the Hydro in providing sufficient water to flush the Lagoon, followed by maintenance flushings.

The Inland Fisheries Service

I am, and always have been, a great supporter of the Inland Fisheries Service and its predecessors, even though I have had my share of arguments with their officers over the years. The IFS has survived tough times without much financial help from Government, and has made a great recovery to now become financially sound. Whilst we might all have our ideas on how they could better manage the fishery, it must be recognised that with limited resources they have a huge and vast waterway to manage and protect.

For a comparison of Government spending, I think the Botanical Gardens in Hobart get more Government support than the IFS. Possibly, and particularly so in the Treasury, the Botanical Garden supporters have more power than the hundreds of anglers attempting to prop up the inland fisheries. Yes, indeed, we need more influence, a bigger voice. Election time is the time for it.

In my opinion the current IFS justifies a major part of its Management Plan principally on the idea of placing as many fish as it can wherever it can, so that the tourist angler can catch a trout and the not so well off Tasmanian angler can put trout on the table. They have a focus on licence numbers, and from their perspective, with good reason. Increasing licence numbers is essential to help fund the IFS Management Plan. Coupling this with increased access opportunities to Tasmania’s streams has resulted in increased angling pressures. Increased angling pressures means not only more fishermen treading the banks and wading the streams, but many anglers are now wielding soft plastic lures, and doing so very successfully and

legally. This is a success story for the IFS except for one thing - the fishery for which they are responsible is being plundered to such dangerously low levels of trout numbers that licence numbers may well fall away due to angler frustration with the fishery.

Managers of the IFS are not fools. They see the problem. They need a fresh approach, a change of direction, if they are to solve the problem. Instead of being the nice guys of the industry they must get tough and dominate the plundering angler.

Drastically lower the bag limits, classify our streams, categorise sporting streams with total catch and release policies, platinum waters for the bait angler, the lure angler and the fly fisher, safeguard the precious streams, bring in regulations to stop wading, design rules and regulations to suit individual waters, signage all the access points with new individual regulations and above all lift the profile of the INLAND FISHERIES SERVICE.

Tasmania has the potential to attract large numbers of anglers from all over the world: anglers that will stay for weeks, employ fishing guides, and rent houses, cars and caravans. Many of these international anglers are high yield visitors boosting sales in local tackle shops and restaurants, and spending their cash where it is desperately needed - in our regional centres. The international angler will, without hesitation, go elsewhere if we retain such high bag limits, have few catch and release waters, and present marketing images of dead fish. Our image must change and the Inland Fisheries Service must lead the way.

One of the priceless waterways in Tasmania is the Brumby's Creek system.

Here is a waterway that presents an enormous profile-lifting opportunity for the IFS. It represents an ideal bait fishery together with an ideal lure fishery and premium fly waters all in the one system. If there is a plundering fly fisher who grumbles about catch and release and no wading in a future fly only section of the stream let him replace his fly with a worm and head off to the bait section. If the IFC were to develop this fishery as it should do and engage a full time river keeper to provide on-site management, then the fear of fluctuating flows should not be a deterrent; it would be perceived as a problem caused by the Hydro not the IFC.

The water quality of our lakes and streams is of constant concern to anglers. The continual change of colour and turbidity keeps us all perplexed and it is perhaps the role of our Inland Fisheries Service to lead the challenge and seek to establish an official scientific inquiry to resolve these mysteries so that anglers have some facts to replace the present dearth of information. All over Tasmania there are waterways, both lakes and streams, that the IFS should govern with sound policies, restricting the desire of so many Tasmanian anglers of every ilk whose aim is to kill fish. This will go a long way towards improving the fishing experience for all licence holders.

I would like to see the IFS establish a memorandum of understanding with the University of Tasmania.

The Anglers

Anglers are individual thinkers and love a discussion and argument based on their own experiences. I hope that as they experience a declining fishery they may consider the causes for such decline and not overly challenge a new generation of stricter rules brought about by an Inland Fisheries Service dedicated to improve Tasmanian waterways.

Finally I look to a brighter future. It just might be that this time we get lucky and have elected a new Premier who has the strength and willpower to lift the inland fishery to its rightful place in the economic structure of this State.

In conclusion, in this response to Jim Allen's call, I have looked at only two waters that might be improved. I hope it is a start that provides some constructive thought for anglers to contemplate.

Jason Garrett

Enoch's Point – Pilkington's Country Estate

(In mid-April some 13 intrepid VFFA members enjoyed John Pilkington's wonderful hospitality at this year's Big River weekend. Three participants have contributed their impressions and memories – Hamish Hughes, Nathan Powles and Hughie Maltby. The road in is not much better in places than a rough teeth-shaking goat track as it meanders along some 17 km of the truly magnificent Big River. So why do we do it? Read the reports.)

Hamish:

The Enoch Country Club maintains it's star rating.

Mine host, John Pilkington, treated his VFFA guests to another very enjoyable weekend at Enoch's Point in mid-April. Highlights were limericks, story telling, some fishing and great food. The autumn weather was kind to us and the little rain received caused no inconvenience or distraction.

As expected the fishing was particularly challenging in the Big River. Richard Kos lived up to his reputation as 'The Cormorant' when his energetic excursion on Saturday afternoon earned him eight trout. He consumed the largest of these for his Sunday morning breakfast in front of us all. His son-in-law, Nathan Powles, distinguished himself by catching various species including a trout on the way up to Enoch's Point. Other successful anglers were Bernard Holbery and Peter McCabe, both rewarded for putting in the hours and effort. Other gentlemen such as Richard Salvado, Hugh Maltby, Lyndon Webb and Dennis Carter had less success, perhaps because they spent more time around the clubhouse than on the stream.

Ned Rogers and Ben Pilkington joined us to enjoy chef Stewart Faichney's tasty pizzas and famous sausage rolls for Saturday lunch. That evening 13 of us sat down at the formal dinner of roast lamb and vegetables. It was delicious. After sticky date pudding we all settled into a few more drinks around the fire. The stories continued. Understandably Sunday morning had a very slow start. Eventually a healthy or hearty breakfast, according to one's tastes, was enjoyed by all. Then stories continued over coffee and tea. Finally we all wandered off in our 4WDS to enjoy the autumn scenery on our way home. As he left one guest was heard to say that he intends to buy a book of limericks so that he can keep up with Pilks next year.

Hamish Hughes



The Big River is indeed a very attractive stream

Nathan Powles -

First trip to Enoch's Point, April 2013

It was with much anticipation that I made the journey to John Pilkington's Country Club Estate at Enoch's Point. A nervous week had preceded the event as I waited to hear if I had made the cut. Fortunately, due to a couple of last minutes withdrawals, I was subbed in off the bench as a guest on the Enoch's Point VFFA trip. I had heard my father-in-law Richard (Kossy) speak many times of his trips to fish the Big River. Having now experienced something of it first-hand I realise that words and photos can never really do it justice. These snippets are my highlights of the weekend:

Snaring a 'trifecta' (a brown, a redfin, and a rainbow) - never mind their fingerling status, I was just delighted to hook something; stumbling upon a family of deer along the Upper Track; the camp-oven genius of Stewy who provided shoulder lamb roast and trimmings and sticky date pudding with caramel sauce - it was a foodie's heaven; ditto the wood-fired pizza - better than any I have bought in the big smoke; solitude; Pilks's hilarious tale of how his father once blew up a safe; lyrebirds, rosellas, kookaburras, and wonga pigeons; Hughie's jokes; the red wine exchange program; climbing through rocks and an overgrown track to fish above "the falls"; spirited debate around the campfire; Pete's insights on Captain Cook, Henry Lawson and keeping sporrans dry; more good humour and other limericks; Bernie's trout pheromone spray having an unintended effect on Peppy the dog; I could go on...

Though asked to contribute a paragraph from the perspective of a newcomer I could very easily write pages. My hearty thanks to the gentlemen of the VFFA: the camaraderie and enjoyment you get from fly-fishing was so evident. There was a great feeling of inclusion and hospitality. And especially - my gratitude to Pilks for allowing myself and others to experience this wonderful piece of history that is Enoch's Point. I can only hope that I get a chance someday to return, and hopefully by then I will have dispensed with the Celta lures and will know the difference between an Elk Hair Caddis and a Pheasant Tail Nymph.

Nathan Powles



Settling into the Saturday Roast

Hugh Maltby

The previous two writers have told you how many members shared this little piece of paradise this year, and how many fish were caught. I want to tell you why members return year after year, and why they make this weekend a ‘must do’ on their annual calendar. The answer is simple - sharing something of the past with friends from a wide and diversified church. Some of us, like Kossy (‘The Cormorant’), fish hard and do well, often in demanding conditions. Others go for the friendship, tranquillity, food and hospitality.

For the uninitiated Enoch’s Point is situated on the Big River that rises north-east of Marysville and flows eventually into Lake Eildon. Gold was discovered in the valley in 1854 and a town sprang up, with fortunes made by some, while others not so fortunate died penniless from disease during the harsh winter months. Today all that remains are the remnants of numerous gold shafts and relics of an era long passed.

In the 1930’s Ralph Pilkington (John’s father, and a country doctor with an exciting and colourful youth) showed great determination and built a hut there for his father. John has fond memories of times in his childhood when his dad put him on the handle bars of a bicycle and walked him in ten miles along the dray track with rods, rifle, and provisions for a week of fun and fishing. John and his older brother Alan, who now lives in the USA, have wonderful recollections of their holidays at Enoch’s Point. Since Ralph’s passing John has been the custodian of the property, and with his family and a loyal group of friends has continued to develop the property, maintaining the original hut and adding more rooms and cabins to accommodate family and friends, all the while being careful to preserve the original style and heritage. Little has changed with the exception of a chain saw to cut firewood, a generator for light at night, and the building of possibly the best pizza oven ever made.

The tranquillity of the Australian bush is rarely broken, and the silence is deafening apart from the resident Bower Birds, the array of parrots, the occasional Lyrebird singing, and an odd deer calling and rubbing itself on the trees at night. That is of course until an assortment of VFFA members descend for a weekend, and with the fires blazing butchers jokes are told



Part of the Pilkington Country Estate – the original hut is on the left



Dennis Carter searching a riffle

and retold, and wine and spirits are consumed along with quantities of superb food. Forgive me for nearly forgetting to mention that the purpose of the weekend is to try to catch and release some fish.

From arrival until departure Pilks and his resident chef and dear friend Stewart cook up a storm of pizza and sausage rolls, culminating in a magnificent Saturday night dinner of roast lamb followed by sticky date pudding. Many friendships are forged or strengthened, stories told and experiences shared, and even a father and son shared the occasion.

Thank you Pilks for allowing us to enjoy your family's special place.

Hughie

The Blakeslee's in New Zealand

It had been 15 years since my wife, Tricia, and I had been “tramping” and fishing on the Caples and Greenstone Rivers in New Zealand’s South Island. Fishing pressure had reportedly increased greatly since our last visit, and regulation of those waters had been tightened as well. New Zealand Fish and Game now manage the Greenstone and Caples as ‘Backcountry Fisheries’, requiring an extra (but free on-line) Backcountry Licence to be carried along with the normal fishing licence. In addition, part of the Greenstone has been designated a ‘Controlled Fishery’ and divided into three ‘Beats’ that are allocated by on-line ballot during the high part of the fishing season, which ended this year on March 31. I didn’t feel like messing around with the bureaucracy, or the ballot system and summer crowds of helicopter fishermen and their guides, so we waited until autumn and flew into Queenstown on March 31.

It was T-shirt and shorts weather – sunny, warm and still - a glorious autumn in Otago. The next day we did our shopping for bushwalking food, bought our DOC Hut tickets, and packed everything (including fly-fishing gear, of course) into our rucksacks. As we enjoyed a meal in one of Queenstown’s many restaurants we were looking forward to seeing new water and to re-visiting some of the pools and runs we had previously fished. The next morning we drove our rental car west to Glenorchy, crossed the Rees and Dart Rivers, then along the West shore of Lake Wakatipu to the trailhead at the Greenstone car-park. It was perfect weather when we started our trip on April 2. The river level was low, showing the effects of a hot summer and drought. We enjoyed a pleasant three hour stroll alongside the lower Greenstone, then up the Caples from the junction of the two rivers, arriving at the Mid Caples Hut as clouds began to build, which was ominous.



Jim with a superb South Island rainbow

The danger of tramping and fishing in the Otago region of New Zealand in autumn is of course the increased likelihood of foul weather, with rain, flooded rivers, gale force winds and even deep snow on the mountain passes. We needn't have worried. True, we were a bit concerned as the rain rattled on the roof while we sipped a cup of the Central Otago pinot and sat warming ourselves beside the potbelly stove in the hut that first evening. But the sky was clear the next morning. The overnight rain had brought up the water level and added a dash of colour to the Caples River, which was no bad thing as it turned out. The fish had been turned on to "feeding mode."



Tricia Blakeslee made some connections too

After breakfast we packed up and started walking north from the hut, following the river. After half an hour we stopped beside a beautiful pool, dropped our packs and got out the fishing gear. I could see several rainbows moving side-to-side, obviously feeding on the nymphs dislodged by the increased water flow. Still, they didn't move too far from their positions behind their "dinner plates" (white rocks) at the end of the pool. I tied on a #14 Gold Bead Head Hare's Ear, and added a #16 Pheasant Tail nymph behind it. After creeping into position downstream of the first fish, I cast and dropped the flies a couple of metres upstream of its lie, then let the nymphs sink and watched the fish for its reaction. When it moved to the side I lifted and was hooked into a feisty Caples rainbow. I managed to lead it down to the tail of the pool, where we did battle for a few minutes, before landing and releasing it.

Then it was Tricia's turn. I handed over the rod and she stepped up to the next fish, which was on station and still feeding. After a few false casts she delivered her nymphs upstream of the trout. They sank, the trout scooped the Pheasant Tail and went berserk. It leapt and cartwheeled, then dashed up to the top of the pool, changed its mind and raced back downstream to the tail before settling down and slugging it out in the deep water mid-pool. Eventually Tricia skidded a superb 3½ lb rainbow onto the shingle for a photo before we gently released it.

Tricia's fish had spooked everything in that pool, so we loaded up our packs and walked on another 20 minutes to the bottom of one of the gorges on the Caples. There was a beautiful deep pool at the bottom of the gorge – classic big fish water. I rigged my rod, stepped up to the shady bank on a backwater out of the main current but on the edge of the pool and spent ten minutes polaroiding it in search of a fish. Nothing to be seen – that is until I looked into the depths almost at my feet. In maybe 5 metres of water, just beside a sunken log, there was a monster trout, slowly moving side to side, opening and closing its mouth (feeding?). But it was facing downstream, in a counter-current in the backwater. What to do? To sink the flies to the fish I needed more weight. So I took off the standard Pheasant Tail trailing the Bead Head Hare's Ear and replaced it with a Copper Bead Head Pheasant Tail nymph. My first cast was a good five metres downstream of the fish, and I watched the sparkle of the bead-heads as they sank and drifted back towards the trout. Not deep enough. My next cast was seven metres

downstream of the fish. Still not deep enough. Next cast was nine metres downstream. This time, the sparkle of the bead-heads was at the right depth. The fish moved slightly to the right. Had he taken the nymph? Only one way to find out - I lifted and was hooked fast. Like a submarine blowing its ballast tanks and surfacing, the biggest rainbow I have ever hooked in New Zealand rose to the top. It wallowed and shook its head trying to dislodge the Pheasant Tail, then dived to the bottom. I had a battle trying to keep it away from the sunken log, fearing the trout would dive under it and break me off. But my biggest fear was that the fish would move out of the backwater into the main current, use its weight and the current to race off downstream and then it would be "Goodnight Irene, I'll see you in my dreams". Unbelievably, after 10 minutes I was actually looking for a place where I could land the bloody thing. I was thinking, "There's just a chance that I can skid it onto that ledge nearby...", when the monster rainbow shook its head and the Pheasant Trail pulled free. DEVASTATION! I'll see that fish in my dreams for a long time to come, that's for sure.

I caught several more rainbows and a brown all about 3½ to 4 lbs that day, and kept the last rainbow for dinner at the Upper Caples Hut. We shared the hut with several other trampers and a deer hunter, Andrew. He had bagged a small black fallow deer earlier in the day, so when we offered him some of our crumbed-fried trout and a cup of pinot, he in-turn offered us some thin-sliced venison he was searing. It was a memorable meal. The next morning, before he headed off up the mountain in search of a trophy stag, he offered us a venison back-strap that was hanging outside the hut in the "meat safe" with the hindquarters of his fallow deer. How could we refuse an eye-fillet of venison?

That day, we left the Caples, climbed over McKellar Saddle and dropped down to McKellar Hut on the upper Greenstone River. The day was perfect - warm and still with fantastic views of the surrounding peaks. And all the time we knew what we would be eating that night. We got some strange looks from the other trampers heating their dehydrated bushwalker meals as we tucked into a venison ragout with our pasta, washed down with the (sob) last of our pinot.

The next morning we left our packs at the hut, took our fly gear and hiked for an hour and a half downstream on the Greenstone to a section I had fished previously. We tied on a #12 Royal Wulff, same as 15 years previously. The pools and runs were pretty much as I remembered them. And as before, the rainbows were rising freely. I targeted a fat 4 lb fish at the bottom of the first pool we fished; it sipped down the Wulff and battle ensued. Tricia took her turn and hooked the next one, but lost it as it tore downstream into the rapids at the bottom of the pool. Together we caught and landed (and sometimes lost) a dozen backcountry Greenstone rainbows that day as we fished back upstream to the McKellar Hut. The next couple of days, as we tramped downstream, we saw some beautiful water but few fish. We fished the best looking pools but the fish we did see and cast to seemed to be very wary. A deer hunter/fisherman we met along the



And another – they kept coming

way said, yes, there weren't many fish in the mid-Greenstone that year and speculated that it was because of the low water level that year and they were wary because of the guides and clients that had been flogging the water all season. Good thing we had made the most of our first day's fishing on the upper Greenstone.

So, there it is. Goodbye to New Zealand (and the sandflies!) for another year.

Practice Makes Perfect

(from Phil Bailey in the UK)

As I write this the trout season on rivers (or 'game fish season' as it is known here in the UK) has started in some counties, but most begin on April 1 each year. Where I am in Yorkshire our season starts on March 15, but this year it has been far too cold to get out.

So what have I been doing?

As you know I have converted to the Italian style of casting and fishing. This has meant long hours (probably about 200) relearning how to cast and unlearning old habits. One thing that I always note when teaching or just observing is how poor most fly fishermen are at presentation and accuracy, not to mention fly selection.

These three components, and in that order, are critical to successful fly-fishing, irrespective of whether you are fishing streams or stillwaters. I bet that if you spent time observing the really good fly fishermen you would find that they are extremely efficient. They are constantly trying to remove faults in their fishing, looking at ways to correct bad habits and streamline their selection of flies.

Most fly fishermen do very little in this regard and simply do not improve between or during the season. I spend a lot of time on these three elements, especially during the months when I am not fishing. So I practice. Here are some of my thoughts and tips that may help you. This is how I prepare for the season ahead.

1. Presentation.

It is no good locating a fish and then blowing the opportunity to catch it through poor casting or bad habits. I read recently that an experiment was undertaken in New Zealand to assess the impact of false casting on fish catch rates. It was demonstrated that the likelihood of catching a fish after the first false cast decreased by 30%, then 50% after the second false cast, 70% after the third, and almost 100% after the fourth. I agree with these observations, and when I am fishing or even practicing I try to limit the number of false casts that I make. Two false casts is the exception for me. So during the off season go down to a park, set up a target, and try to get the line out to it after a single false cast.

This may mean that you need to deploy mini double hauls into the back and forward casts to create line speed. Interestingly, this is exactly what the Italian style does in order to generate high line speed on underlined rods.

Another thing to note is the plane in which you cast. Most people tend to cast in a horizontal plane (i.e. the line travels back and forth parallel to the ground). In the final cast the line straightens out and the leader turns over and delivers a 'delicate' presentation. To me, there are a couple of things wrong with this. The first is that the line generally hits the water first and if you are fishing a stream drag will immediately start to pull the line downstream so that when the leader finally lands the fly is almost immediately impacted by drag. The second is the effect that wind has on a leader that is trying to turn over when all of the line speed has been removed.



Try this. When I first started fly-fishing I was mesmerized by Charles Ritz's 'high speed – high line' theory. Get the back cast up high and change the plane of the forward cast downwards so that you're targeting the spot at which you want the fly to land.

In the Italian style of casting, and because we are casting at high speed, we achieve this sort of delivery as we believe that you only have one chance at catching a fish. You could take the same approach, so practice it.

I practise using two hoops set up two metres apart with the front one higher than the rear one. I then cast through those hoops and their orientation forces me to cast in a plane that is directed down at the target.

2. Accuracy

I think that this is vitally important. I cannot even begin to count the number of times I have seen people overcasting. I am even guilty of it.

Vary your leader length and you will invariably overcast because you are not used to the additional length. So I practice line control religiously. I take a target down to the park and I cast to it, not at it. I move a couple of paces back and do the same, then move forward and repeat the exercise. From this I get to understand the length of line I am casting PLUS the leader so that I am placing the fly right where I want it. If you are fishing in New Zealand then this is one competency you cannot afford to neglect.

I use three hoops. I start with a hula hoop (yep, you can remember those) and once I have got into the slot of casting every cast inside this hoop I move to a smaller one and repeat the process. Finally I move to a hoop that has a diameter of about 50 cm and concentrate on hitting it every time.

Lining a fish with your cast to me is unforgivable. Yet I see it all the time. I even do it myself sometimes and admonish myself every time. So I practice a different approach. I make a cast off to the side so that I know that the amount of line I will ultimately cast to the fish will be the right length. This is much easier to achieve on running water as you don't have that luxury to a cruising fish in a lake.

But if you fish rivers then practice it. Using the same target, make one cast off to the side and then the next cast right on target.

3. Flies.

The more I fish the more convinced I am that a generalist fly with the right shape and size for the food chain is all I really need. Yes, I carry quite a few patterns, and carrying a number of fly boxes is a habit I have tried to break but failed; I simply love tying flies. But I mainly fish out of one fly box, and in that box I have five flies in three different sizes. If I am getting refusals I change the size before I change the fly. This makes it easier for me and I become more efficient as I concentrate on PRESENTATION and ACCURACY. Something to think about!

In Summary

I know how lazy we can become in the off season or if we cannot get away fishing regularly. I also understand that what I do is not for everyone. But I do know that a few sessions of practice using some simple props can make a substantial difference to your fly-fishing.

So for me, the weeks leading up to the season will find me out in the park at any opportunity with a few hoops and targets, just practicing my presentation and accuracy. It can be quite a lot of fun if you do it with your fishing buddy.

Cheers,

Philip Bailey

This Month's Yarn

(from November 1961)

"I'll tell you what, it can be cold up there at Eucumbene in autumn", said Alf, picking up his change after the glasses had been topped up. "Too right!" agreed McTaggart, grabbing his replenished glass. "Extremely cold in fact. And I once had a peculiar experience up there because of it."

Imbibing another mouthful of lunch, he continued: "It happened in May a few years ago. I'd heard from that exceptional fishing guide Rod Barford that you can catch trout up there even when it's snowing, and it was certainly snowing when I arrived there late in the afternoon. So I decided to wait till the next morning before I fished. I got up just on dawn and found that it was fine and clear and breathlessly still, so I decided to fish a little backwater close to where my car was parked."

"I was fishing from the bank with a special dry fly of my own creation, and had just thought to myself that I'd never seen a fly lie so inert on the surface without even the faintest suggestion of a ripple, when I spotted a trout darting up from below. But instead of taking the fly the fish suddenly stopped short immediately underneath it, shook its head and fluttered downwards tail first. The same thing happened with three or four other fish before I finally woke up to what was going on – the lake had frozen over, and the trout were knocking themselves unconscious on the ice when they came up to grab the fly."

Fishing at the Bottom of the Globe

(from Harry Robertson – our globe trotting correspondent and close friend of Paul Squires)

I was awakened by the bustling of the flight attendants offering the breakfast boxes. It had been a year since I had heard the accompanying announcement that we had only an hour to go before reaching our destination of Buenos Aires, Argentina. I had departed Atlanta, Georgia, ten hours earlier. I wondered how many times in the past twenty years I had made this trip, sometimes several times a year, from my home in Richmond, Virginia. Its mid-February and once again my destination is Tierra del Fuego, an island in an archipelago near the southern tip of South America. The island (TdF) is 25% Argentinian and 75% Chilean. I annually host two weeks of fishing the legendary Rio Grande River for sea run brown trout on their annual spawning run in a river that empties into the Atlantic Ocean near the town of Rio Grande.

I will meet my first group at a hotel in Buenos Aires, where this year's participants will gather from all over the globe. Some are there on their tenth trip with me; others on their first. We catch up on each other's activities over lunch and a later dinner.

The next morning at 3:30am we gather in the hotel lobby, check out, and board a bus to the domestic airport fifteen minutes away. The flight to Rio Grande is three hours, and when we arrive we are met by yet another bus and transferred to Despedida Lodge, near the bank of the Rio Grande. The rest of the day is spent napping, eating and preparing gear for the week to come.

A regular fishing day consists of an early breakfast and departure from the lodge after participants have been introduced to the guides and had their gear installed on rod holders on trucks. Spey rods are very popular in this fishery in deference to the river conditions and desired drifting of the flies. Other choices are 8, 9 or 10 weight rods, and these work well, depending on how much "game" one brings to the river! Sinking tip lines, floating lines and intermediate lines are also carried.

Normally during the two weeks we are there we can expect high winds that will test the very best of fly rod casters. The river runs through a valley with no obstructions - no trees or even high shrubbery. Long leaders of twenty pounds are recommended, and these are dressed surprisingly with small flies such as size 14 and 16 nymphs. Then again, size 2 dry flies are skated – the fish are not supposed to feed on the spawning runs but will strike violently during periods when I suspect they are trying to advance to the next pool on the river.

The lodge's section of the river has 14 pools that hold the trout. Anglers fish in pairs and share a guide, and have two locations to choose from for their morning and evening sessions each day. After the morning sessions the anglers return to the lodge for a full course lunch, accompanied by excellent Argentine Malbec wines. Next the very civilized siesta is observed ... not an option. At 5 o'clock it's back to the river and anglers fish until dark at around 11:00pm. When you arrive back at the lodge there is a cocktail hour, followed by a huge dinner, and then a welcoming bed in your room with a relaxing bath.

This trip is not for the uninitiated. Wind was not a factor for much of this year's trip, but can be a real threat to those who are not prepared. 40 mph sustained winds are common, with higher gusts. It can be 32°F (ie 0°C) when you leave the lodge in the morning. The river can be so cold you are sorely tempted to retire to the truck for a warm-up, even when you're



Chuck Moos and Fred May with two pansize browns

properly attired with layers and appropriate socks under waders, along with fingerless gloves and a hat that will not blow off.

Having said all this I hasten to add that this is the only place in the world I know where you are going to fish pools with 20 pound plus brown trout leaping and posturing right where you are casting. I have heard it said Muskies are the fish of a thousand casts. I can say that these trout have had many more than a thousand casts from me in the twenty years I have visited this river. Yes, I have caught fish many times, but have also had days when they won and I received not a nibble. The benchmark for a successful trip is to catch fish every day and to have one fish over twenty pounds during your week. You must fish hard and with purpose and have brought enough game to cast efficiently ... and stay out of the truck. The next cast may be your reward. I can count on one hand the few anglers who have not attained that wished for goal. My largest is a 24 pounder some years ago, and I can assure you it was a memorable experience.

The picture here is of two friends who had an exceptional experience. Both are excellent fishermen and very serious about fishing every minute available. They hooked up late one evening and after the half hour of the fight steered their catches near the guide where he netted both with one swipe ... talk about memorable. The guy on the left is Chuck Moos, the right Fred May.

My next trip is a return to Nicaragua for the Guapote I find such good sport on poppers. If it is anything like I am expecting I shall send a report. At the end of this particular adventure I met your fellow member Paul Squires in Buenos Aires. We shared a dinner and lunch. We have become close friends and hope to fish Exmouth, Australia, together in the near future. That's where all this reporting started!

Harry

FLY OF THE MONTH

The Essential Midge - Mick Hall (Part 2)



Olive Brown female Midge size 14 - Goulburn River

“(Mick Hall is well known to us all. A VFFA member, he is also one of Australia’s best-known and respected fly tiers. When asked for details of one of his flies for our Fly of the Month he provided a very comprehensive exposition on our midges, along with several patterns he suggests. His notes and suggestions for fishing midges was given last month, along with two of his suggested patterns. This month he lists two more tried and tested midge patterns.)

The Flies

I highly recommend that you tie your midge patterns using a grub hook, preferably with a straight eye, such as the Mustad Signature Series C49S in sizes 10 through to size 18. You should carry midge patterns in a number of sizes, as explained with the tyings featured below.

Tungsten Beadhead Dark Brown Midge, as tied by Mick Hall

Hook: Mustad C49S, sizes 12 – 14
Thread: Tan 10/0
Bead: Small tungsten 0 bead
Body: Dark brown Uni-Flex
Ribbing: Copper wire - five turns



Notes: Use this pattern on streams in moderate to fast water. If the flow is really fast try two flies - one on the tip and the second on a dropper. If needed you can use an indicator so you can follow the drift line. Don't knock it when your eyes start to fail - indicators can be your best friend.

Balling Midge as tied by Mick Hall

Hook: Mustad R50 dry fly hook
Size: 12 - 14
Thread: Black 10/0
Body Hackle: Whiting Farms Grizzle Hackle wound from above the barb to the eye.



Notes: This pattern is used on evening when in some waters male midge actually ball up and become a favourite target for old Speckles. This fly is a favourite at Lake Eucumbene in the Snowy Mountains during summer months



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 Peter Boag 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 2012 Annual Dinner:

Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network • Flyfisher Magazine • FlyLife Magazine • Hayes on Brumbys • Hookup Bait and Tackle • J. M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle, Mick Hall Flies • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Nick Taransky Bamboo Rod Maker • Pro-Angler Tackle • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies • Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Compleat Angler Box Hill • The Flyfisher Tackle Store • The Fly Fishers Rod and Creel in Thornbury • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle

VFFA Meetings & Activities

May 2013

- 3 Opening of the Australian Fly Fishing Museum in Clarendon, Tasmania - Dinner
- 4 Opening of the Australian Fly Fishing Museum – Cocktail Function
- 16 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Auction**
- 22 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club

June 2013

- 2 Sunday Casting commences – at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 6 Dinner with Partners – at the Celtic Club (Convenor - Peter Boag)
- 9 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 15 Annual Cane Makers' Day – Northern Suburbs Fly Fishing Club
- 16 Annual Cane Day – at the Red Tag Casting Pools (Organised by Bernard Holbery)
- 20 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**
- 23 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 26 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 30 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

July 2013

- 7 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 14 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 18 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**
- 21 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
- 27 Warrnambool Annual Game Dinner
- 28 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

August 2013

- 2/3/4 Annual Bullen Merri trip (Convenor – Richard Kos)
- 4 Sunday Casting - 10am to 2pm at the Red Tag Pools
- 11 Sunday Casting - 10am to 2pm at the Red Tag Pools
- 14 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 18 Sunday Casting - 10am to 2pm at the Red Tag Pools
- 23 Annual Dinner – Guest Speaker: Jim Allen**
- 24 President's Casting Day - 10am to 3pm at the Red Tag Pools

September 2013

- 11 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club: preparation for AGM
- 19 Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club.**

October 2013

- 17 General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club**
- 23 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
- 25 – 27 Re-scheduled Donger Challenge at the Bairnsdale Fishing Lodge (To be confirmed)

February 2014

- 15 – 21 Annual Trip to Tasmania, staying at Hayes on Brumby's