



• REGISTERED BY AUSTRALIA POST: PUBLICATION NO. VBH 2899 •

VOL. 62 NO.7

THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

MAY 2014

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

www.vffa.org.au

May Meeting ... with Rick Dobson

On Thursday, May 15, at the Celtic Club.

Our guest speaker for the May meeting will be VFFA member Rick Dobson, proprietor of the Aussie Angler tackle store. Rick, who is a very keen and competent fly fisher, is right up to date with the latest in fly fishing gear. At our May meeting he will be telling us all about the new rods, lines, reels, waders, and fly tying materials now on the market. He will also bring along some samples of the best, so if you want to get your hands on the latest top-selling gear from Sage, Hardy, or Simms, or any of the other suppliers, then this will be a great opportunity.

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

All members are invited to attend the Dinner, but PLEASE make a Dinner booking by 12 noon on Thursday, May 15 – either by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message, or by sending a **text message** to President Terry Rogers on 0438 553 326.



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Advance Notice – May Meeting

Our guest speaker for the May meeting will be Rick Dobson, a member of the VFFA and well known to us as the owner and manager of the Aussie Angler store. Rick knows all the latest fads and trends in gear and will be talking to us about the recent innovations and developments in fly fishing and fly tying equipment and materials.

So if you want to hear all about the latest rods and reels and vests and waders and fly tying gear, plus heaps more, then come along. Rick has promised to bring along a selection of the finest and best so you'll be able to see and handle it too.

Mark it in your diary – Thursday May 15.



A Warm Welcome to a New Member

It is with great pleasure that we welcome Iain Skinner as a member of the VFFA. We trust that his membership brings many years of pleasure and enjoyment. Welcome aboard Iain.

VFFA Dinner with Partners

Shamrock Dining Room at the Celtic Club

Friday, June 13, 2014

@ 7:00 pm for 7:30 pm



© Ron Lehman www.CigarCJ.com 443300

\$40 per person

Drinks: On consumption paid by individuals

Dress – Jacket and Tie for Men

Convenor: Terry Rogers

Please RSVP to Terry on 0438 553 326

Or leave a text or verbal message on 0498 254 497,

by Wednesday, June 11



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The April Meeting – with John Waters

(The inner sanctum of the Celtic Club hardly seemed the ideal venue for a discussion and demonstration on fly casting. But our guest speaker for the April meeting, current Australian fly casting champion John Waters, was in superb touch, and gave a talk that was greatly appreciated by those present. Such was the interest that he was kept speaking and responding to questions for over an hour. The following is a very short summary of his presentation.)



“My passion is casting and its connection to fly fishing”

My passion is casting and its connection to fly fishing, and I will give you my thoughts on what I think makes an effective and efficient caster. I’ll tell you what creates an efficient and effective loop, and what you can watch for when you practice by yourself. If you are like me you will spend a lot of time just moving the rod backwards and forwards. You are conscious of what your fly is doing and what happens to it when you put it down on the water (or the grass), but it is handy to know that there are some indicators you can watch for when you are casting that will tell you whether you are being as effective as you could be.

If you look at casting as the need to deliver a fly to the water so that it will attract a fish, then you need to deliver that fly to where you want it land, and not where the wind is trying to put it. So efficiency and effectiveness are important. To me it is simple - there are just four or five factors that determine the effectiveness and efficiency of your cast, and therefore what happens to your fly. By focusing on these basic building blocks, and practicing them, it will all come together.

In discussing casting we need to note that it’s now called Casting Sport because casting and fly fishing have diverged. There are now many people who can cast very nicely but who have no interest in fishing. They are in it for the competition. We in Melbourne are blessed with some wonderful facilities, with three specifically designed casting pools in the city and hopefully a new one soon at Geelong.

So what does casting have to do with fly fishing? To my thinking good casting simply allows you to minimise your false casting. When we’re fly fishing we’re only actually fishing when our fly is in or on the water. While we’re false casting, or bushwalking, or talking with our mates we are not catching any fish. So the ability to cast a loop efficiently and effectively means that we can minimise those false casts and get our fly out to the target quicker and more effectively. The line and the leader will turn over properly, the fly will land in the target area, and hopefully the fish will come to it and all the good things that happen in fly fishing will then occur.

The fundamentals of fly casting are to do with the grip, the wrist, and the elbow. If these move correctly your rod will move correctly and your loop becomes efficient. Then if your trajectory is right your accuracy increases dramatically and your fly goes where you want it to go.

The biggest problem I see in fly casting starts and ends with the grip. Your ability to push your loop into the wind and achieve proper leader turnover starts and finishes with the grip. Most fly



John had a keen and attentive audience

rods have a small depression at the back of the grip (whether ‘full wells’ or ‘half wells’), and ergonomically that’s where the fleshy part of your hand (which I call the heel of your hand) must sit when you grip the rod. Many casting faults are created when we don’t grip the rod correctly and thus allow the reel to slide inside our forearm. Efficient casting requires the reel to travel in the plane of the forearm and it must remain underneath the forearm but never inside it.

In the casting action the heel of the hand governs the ‘block’ or the stop in the forward cast. If you do that correctly it’s amazing how much speed your loop gets and how tight your loops are. You get those narrow ‘candy cane-shaped’ loops where the fly line section that is turning over is stacked vertically above the bit that has already turned over. The shape of those tight loops is determined and driven by the ‘block’, and that’s determined by your grip. So when you’re out having a practice cast tie a bit of wool on the end of the tippet and go through your normal casting stroke, stopping the rod sharply with the heel of your hand in its forward movement. I use the term ‘block’ because it happens instantly. It is an instantaneous stop, and when you do it correctly the rod stops at a 45° angle to the ground and the loop powers down to the water.

The second thing that is fundamental is the movement of the wrist and the elbow. The primary pivot is not the wrist but the elbow. You must use your forearm and wrist together to cast correctly, and whether you are casting 30 feet or 100 feet it’s all about lifting your elbow and rotating your forearm, and it’s only at that point that you snap the rod back and block it with your thumb so that it stops instantly and can’t go any further. So – in summary, you block the back cast with your thumb and you block the forward cast at the 45° point with the heel of your hand.

The action of lifting and pulling down in casting is very similar to what you would go through if you had a tomahawk in your hand and wanted to chop a block of wood in half. You would lift the tomahawk to a position where your elbow would be at shoulder height and you would

support the tomahawk with your thumb. Then you would pull down with your forearm and when you got close to the block you would rotate your wrist and split the wood. That's the same action that you need when fly casting. You lift with your forearm, block the rod with your thumb, pull down with your forearm and block with the heel of the hand, stopping the rod at 45°. When you do this correctly the false cast just magically happens. The key to a good overhead cast is the sharp delivery block with the heel of the hand. There's nothing gentle about fly casting, even when you're using your 3 weight rod and fishing a size 22 midge. My philosophy is that you maintain your technique and let your gear take care of the presentation.

The key to the delivery is that the follow through is at the same rate at which the loop is unfurling. You want your fly and your rod tip to land together. It is no good having your fly slap on the water and then drop your hand. You deliver down, snap, and follow through to the water at the same rate that the loop is unfurling. It is almost as if the fly line is a solid member that you want to come down in a rigid format with the rod tip and the fly alighting together.

Obviously when you are casting a short cast you want the loop to unfurl very quickly, so your delivery stroke is quite fast. However for a longer cast you have more time as the loop unfurls to drop the line. So when you are practising you watch your loop unfurling and you watch your hand come down, and you make sure that they alight together. If you do that your efficiency will improve dramatically.



“Maintain your technique and let your gear take care of the presentation”

We've talked about the block on the back cast with the thumb and then on the forward cast with the heel of the hand. When you're practising there's a couple of indicators you can use, and the key indicator is your thumbnail. You start off with the rod just outside your casting foot, so if you're a right-hander you stand with your right foot forward (though when you're actually fishing who gives a damn, but this is about casting technique). Have your thumb just in front of your little toe because that's where you begin the stroke. Lift with the elbow and then rotate your forearm back and snap your wrist and block the rod. If you now look up you will see your thumbnail just pass the vertical. That's the position of the back cast for a typical 20 foot to 50 foot cast when fly fishing.

Your thumb now should be in the plane of your shoulder and not twisted around. If you are looking down at your thumbnail then you haven't lifted your arm enough. If you can only see part of your thumbnail then you may have twisted your wrist. If all is correct then your thumbnail, elbow and shoulder will form a triangle and will all be in the same plane. If you've lifted the rod correctly the rod and line and arm will all be in the same single plane and your cast will be fast and effective. So watch what your thumbnail is telling you and make sure it's in that correct position. If you do it all correctly you will feel the line powering back behind you and deflecting the rod tip. It will keep tension on the rod tip and then it's simply a matter of pulling down, turning over and following through to complete the cast. Cast down on your

forward cast and let the rod throw the loop out. Don't push out or straighten your elbow when you're casting because this will widen your loops and slow them down, and a tailing loop will be created so the fly catches in the line.

I emphasise again that you should cast with your thumb on top of the rod handle. There are other popular grips but each has drawbacks. But if you keep your thumb on top and move your elbow, your forearm and your wrist with the appropriate blocks with the thumb on the back cast and the heel of your hand on the forward cast your loops will be tight and you will cast well.

If your hand moves back behind you then you'll lose vision and you won't see what's happening. So it's important that you stop it in front of your shoulder and watch it. Some experts recommend casting in front of your face, but I recommend that the plane of the casting arc be out and vertically over your shoulder. Of course some of this changes for presentation casts to defeat drag, but that's another talk on another occasion.

Remember that short casts require a short arcs, and a short arc requires a short lift with the elbow and an earlier block on the back cast with the thumb. But even with a very short cast you should still lift your elbow and get speed and power in the backcast. As you increase the length of your cast you need to lengthen the arc. For my normal fishing with casts typically 20 to 60 feet my casting arc never deviates out of that vertical plane. If you want to widen your arc because you're false casting say 50 feet of line then extend the distance your arm travels vertically. If your grip is right and your blocks on the back and forward casts are right and your tempo is correct, then you can continue that rod lift with the elbow, snap the wrist back, and can actually have your rod go back almost to the horizontal. It's amazing how much line you can aerialise this way, and it's easy to do - you simply move the block further behind, but still in the plane of your shoulder. The delivery is then the same whether it's 70 feet or 7. You can comfortably cast 60 or 70 feet all day with the movement of your forearm just past the vertical. For shorter casts your forearm will stop at the vertical or just before it.

Trajectory is important because the perfect cast is not parallel to the grass or the water. The forward cast and the back cast must be exactly 180° apart, but if these casts are parallel to the water then your final forward cast will deliver a fly line that is straightening 6 feet above the water and which will then start to retract. If there's no wind it will dribble down onto the water with the fly landing 3 feet from the end of the fly line. If there is some wind then the fly can be blown anywhere and all accuracy is lost. So the key for accuracy and leader turnover is to change the trajectory so that the backcast is higher and the forward cast is aimed down, whilst still preserving that 180° separation. So you need your forward cast to straighten below the horizontal and the back cast to straighten above the horizontal. If you throw your backcast above the horizontal and your forward cast also above the horizontal then the separation is less than 180° and you will create tailing loops. So when making your cast ensure that your block on the forward false cast is at such an angle that the loop is straightening below the horizontal but not ticking on the water. Play with this and experiment to find the right angle by changing your timing and where you stop, but with your rod still finishing at the 45° angle to the water. If your cast is on a trajectory down at the target your delivery is simply a matter of following through because the loop is already on the right path towards your target. All of my false casts are angled down toward the water so I don't have to make a change in my cast for my delivery.

When I'm practising I like to put too much power in the back and forward casts, this power coming from the wrist snap and the instantaneous stop. I like to overpower both and then I soften the wrist a little to get the timing exactly right. You won't know where the cut-off point is

until you step over the line, so don't be afraid of overpowering during practice. If you're casting into a headwind you need to steepen your trajectory so that your loops turn over just above the water and straighten your leader. Try to undercut the wind. No one can do this perfectly every time so it's a matter of practice. When casting with the wind behind you throw your back cast down a little and throw your front cast up so the wind will carry it.

I'll send you a little article on accuracy and put some notes together for you. I'm also quite happy to come along one morning to the Red Tag Pools and meet with you there and give you a couple of hours of instruction.

This Month's Yarn

(from September 1961)

"You know, at times trout will eat almost anything," remarked Alf, while waiting expectantly for the barmaid to pour another round of lunches. "In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if they even ate something as silly as mushrooms." Choco looked up with a very quizzical expression, but McTaggart had no trouble rising to the occasion.

"It's not all that silly, actually," he surmised, gazing reflectively at the far corner of the bar. "And it reminds me of a rather unusual experience I had some years ago. You know, the lower parts of the stalks of mushrooms occasionally hold little grubs or maggots, and trout are rather fond of these. Years ago I was prospecting in the Crackenback Creek area and had stopped to boil my billy near the top of a waterfall. The view was magnificent, with a sheer drop of some 50 feet straight down into a huge pool below. There had been some rain a couple of days earlier, so of course I was interested to see if anything was moving in the water above the falls."

"The first thing I noticed was about half a dozen of those tough scrub mushrooms lying on the bed of the creek. They were big too - at least 6 inches in diameter - and had probably been washed in by the recent rain. But as I looked I couldn't help but notice one of these mushrooms moving around quite strangely, and then I spotted a fairly decent trout biting on the stalk. I reckoned he was after some of those little maggots I mentioned earlier."

"Anyhow, the trout had got a firm grip of the stalk when a sudden swirl of water washed the mushroom with the trout still attached downstream in the current. It raced out into the fast water near the edge of the fall, and then quick as a flash the mushroom and trout were airborne. I ran to the edge to see what happened, expecting to find the poor fish floating belly up in the pool below. But what I saw staggered me - there was the trout slowly descending through the air, still hanging onto the mushroom, which of course was acting as a parachute. The trout landed gently on the water below, released his grip and swam away. Now I regard trout as the most intelligent of fish, and I'm sure this one had worked out the whole scenario and saw the mushroom as the only safe way he could get down to the good pool below without injuring himself."

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

Sunday Casting Commences in June

Sunday Casting is a winter activity advertised on our calendar. What's it all about? According to our President it's normally a very casual and relaxed social event run by Joe Haslauer. Joe brings the drinks and eats – tea and coffee, and a fine selection of continental sausages that he barbecues for lunch. He is a great convenor and a wonderful provider of European Smallgoods.

Casting commences at around 9:30 – 10:00 am and finishes between noon and 1:00 pm regardless of the weather. Attendance is not usually large, with 6 - 10 participants there on average. Members bring their rods and practice their casting. They often try other members' rods. They can also bring along any potential new members to try their hand at casting. There are always experienced members there who are willing to assist with some tuition.

As it happens the first day of Sunday Casting this year will see members, or at least the serious casters, competing for the Tom and Frank McDonough Memorial Trophy. This is a prestigious and long-standing VFFA trophy well-worth competing for.

The Red Tag pool can be found in Fairlea Road off Yarra Bend Road, Fairfield (Melway 44 J2); just look for a hardy bunch of fly fishermen having a coffee and a laugh.

Annual Cane Makers' Day – Saturday June 14

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 some information so that they might enjoy the company of like minded fly fishers.

VFFA Cane Day - Sunday June 15

Members are reminded that our annual Cane Day is on
Sunday, June 15, 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.



One from the archives – how many faces can you recognise?

President's Message

Since late last year Rick Dugina, our immediate Past President, has been in contact with Sue Kosch, the River Health Officer with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, to express the interest of the VFFA in assisting them with their Stream Side Revegetation Project (Rubicon River above Tumbling Waters). As a result of these discussions Sue emailed the following response on April 2, 2014:



“The GB CMA welcomes the opportunity to work with recreational fishers such as the VFFA. Following on from our conversations last year where you expressed interest in involving your group in a “hands on” stream side revegetation project, I have taken the liberty of ordering seedlings for the site which is known as Scorah’s Above Tumbling Waters. (DEPI Fisheries have installed 3 stiles at this location).

As we are getting closer to rain it is probably a good time to start organising a planting day. The time for planting is from mid-May right through until the end of August to early September. The GB CMA will co-ordinate the preparation of the site which will involve spot spraying with a herbicide to remove grass and other weed competition. I would like to do this in consultation with you. GB MCA will provide seedlings, guards, stakes and planting tools.

If you could please let me know if the VFFA is still keen to go ahead with this project and suggest possible dates it would be greatly appreciated. We can then start to organise the details.”

As this newsletter goes to press, I am waiting on Sue to call me back in order to start the planning process. It is my suggestion that a planting day be scheduled for Sunday, July 13, which allows reasonable preparation time. I will provide full details in the June Newsletter. The foregoing information is intended to be read as an “Advance Notice” to members to make every effort to assist with this worthy project. I will shortly be emailing as many members as possible to seek their assistance. In the meantime would those who are keen to assist please take the time to call the VFFA Message Service on 0498 254 497 and leave their name and contact number.

At the May General Meeting, on Thursday May 15, our Guest Speaker is Rick Dobson, the proprietor of Aussie Angling. There are further details on Rick’s topic in this publication.

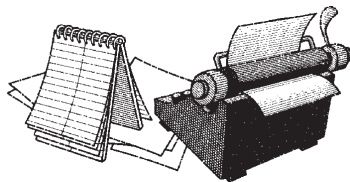
The VFFA Partners’ Dinner will be held at the Celtic Club on Friday, June 13. The charge is \$40 per person for Dinner, with drinks at bar prices. Those wishing to attend please book by calling me on 0438 553 326 before 5:00pm on Wednesday June 11.

Finally, on behalf of all VFFA Members, I extend our sincere condolences to Peter and Patricia McCabe on the recent tragic death of their son Patrick.

Best Wishes,

Terry Rogers
(President)

From the EDITOR'S DESK



“O, sir, doubt not that Angling is an art; is it not an art to deceive a trout with an artificial fly?”
(*Izaak Walton, 1594 - 1685*). Well said Mr Walton!

As I write this it is pouring rain and chilly outside. Clearly autumn is giving way to winter and our river fishing is drawing to a close. Regardless of gazetted closing dates, the rain and subsequent high water and cold temperatures do it for us. Time for something else.

The something else for me will undoubtedly involve trips to a few of our stillwaters, which can provide very pleasant outings, along with the chance of encountering some bigger fish. Our Victorian winter weather is mostly mild, and provided you rug up for the conditions you'll find the fish don't mind the colder temperatures at all.

Winter is also a good time to replenish the fly boxes. When the weather outside is cold and wet and the wind is howling I'll put on some pleasant music, get myself a largish cup of coffee (yes, I confess - I'm a teetotaler), pull out the fly tying vice and furs and feathers and start tying up next season's flies. Fly tying is a very pleasant and relaxing pastime, and it adds to our fly fishing enjoyment. Catching a trout on a fly is a heap of fun, but deceiving a fish with one of our own creations is so much better. And this fly tying business is not too difficult. There are lots of very effective and popular patterns that are fairly simple to tie with a bit of care and practice, and the end products are more than adequate.

I originally started tying my own flies because I was under the illusion that this would save me money, and when you can pay up to \$4 or more for shop flies you might occasionally find some savings. But good quality tools and materials are not cheap – you can buy a lot of flies for the price of a couple of A-grade cock hackles or a Renzetti vice. And the rapidly growing variety of exciting new materials ensures that any trip to a tackle shop will find you emerging with yet more stuff you couldn't possibly do without. But tying your own releases those creative juices and gives you the freedom to experiment, to try variations, to tie flies not available in the shops, and to just do your own thing. It's all great fun and from a fishing point of view quite productive.

I must confess to being a tier of very modest skills, but after spending a few minutes reading a manual as a refresher, or watching a good YouTube video, I can then patiently plod along churning out some fairly simple favourite patterns that keep catching fish for me. Mind you, I've now got several fly boxes full of flies that I was told, or read somewhere, were absolute ripsnorters, guaranteed to drag fish out of any hidey hole and having them racing to line up for a feed. Yes, that's right – I'm also very gullible. But we live in hope, and hope remains one of the crucial ingredients of fly fishing.

Standard procedure now for me when tying flies is to crimp down the barbs on the hooks. This makes it much easier to extract the flies from hooked fish (and is much kinder to them in terms of catch and release). It also makes it a whole lot quicker to unhitch flies caught up in the back of my jumper or coat following an errant cast on a windy day. And of course the real prompt for this noble behaviour on my part came from the last time I got a hook deeply embedded in a finger.

Changing tack – first an apology to Yale Sacks. In the last issue we published a photo of Yale holding up a very large steelhead. But it wasn't, was it. The fish Yale was holding was a magnificent Rogue River Spring Chinook ('King') Salmon. I need to read photo file labels more carefully.

Secondly, we should note a very significant birthday this month. In April 1864 that precious cargo of salmon and trout ova from England had completed its 12,000 mile journey and was unpacked at the Salmon Ponds in Tasmania. Then on May 4, exactly 150 years ago, those first young brown trout finally emerged – just 300 of them. But they did well, and today our rivers carry their progeny and provide us with lots of glorious fishing. So, a rather late but very hearty Birthday Greeting to those 300 tiny fingerlings! (A recent issue of Mike Stevens' *Tasmanian Fishing News* carries an excellent article on this topic.)

Finally, readers of our newsletter might see some changes in the next couple of issues. Mike Jarvis has been heading up a small Council sub-committee that has reviewed the layout and formatting of our newsletter. The size and basic content will remain the same, but there are some exciting and refreshing changes in its appearance. We're all a bit wary of change, but I'm sure members will like what they see when the changes come into effect.

Tight lines,

Lyndon Webb

Trevor Jones – a Tribute

(by his friend Peter Campbell)

Trevor passed away on March 12, 2014. He was 83 years old.

He was a member of the VFFA from the late 1950s until well into the 1970s, and was instrumental in my joining the Association in 1962. Sadly his fishing was curtailed somewhat because of his wife's illness, but he still managed to get out fairly often in the 1960s. He preferred to fish with a cane rod and didn't bother much with the modern equipment.

I have fond memories of fishing with Trevor at Lauriston Reservoir on those warm summer evenings when we fished a Nobby Hopper just prior to dark, then changed to a mud-eye or black cricket pattern when the light had gone. We caught some good fish too, sometimes staying until well past 11 o'clock.

He was one of the funniest men I ever knew. He liked a drink or two, and was a champion raconteur of hilarious jokes. It's likely that he was the inspiration for that fabulous VFFA character McTaggart, as like the irrepressible McTaggart, Trevor always enjoyed a few glasses of lunch and a riotous story or two prior to heading out fishing.

Members who have been in the Association since the 1960s will have many happy memories of Trevor. I will certainly miss him.

Peter Campbell

The Wisdom of G.E.M. Skues - Part 2

(George Edward MacKenzie Skues was a British lawyer, author and very prominent fly fisherman who is most noted for the invention of modern-day nymph fishing. Mick Hall recently came across some material written by Skues and has passed it on for publication in our newsletter. We printed the first part last month, where Skues told us all about the materials used in fly tying. In this second part he describes how to tie a fly. This makes fascinating reading, and our sincere thanks to Mick for making it available.)

Introduction by Mick:

During the early years of the 20th century, apart from his classic works, G.E.M. Skues wrote a huge number of articles, most of which were published in *The Fishing Gazette*, *The Field* and the *Journal of the Fly Fishers' Club*. In 1911 the Earl of Suffolk released a four volume work entitled "*The Encyclopaedia Of Sport*", with contributions from many of the noted sportspeople of that era. This work included a large article on fly tying by Skues. Owing to the rarity of this work, I have taken the liberty of reproducing it here in full. I hope you enjoy the read.

From The Encyclopaedia of Sport, Vol. IV, Rackets to Zebra, Published by William Heinemann, London, 1911. Edited by the Earl of Suffolk and Berkshire.

FLY DRESSING FOR TROUT AND GRAYLING

WET FLY AND DRY FLY

G.E.M. Skues

General Principles of Fly Tying



In spite of the numerous insects imitated and the innumerable patterns to be found described in books, there are structurally only two types of artificial fly, viz., (1) those hackled at the shoulder only, with or without wings, and (2) those hackled all down the body, or the palmer or bumble class, again with or without wings. These are the essential characteristics, and whether the hackle be soft and mobile, or still and glassy, whether the fly be winged or wingless, fat, thin, or medium, whether it be heavily or lightly dressed, whether it has quill or herl or dubbing for body, ribbing, tag or whisk, are matters of detail. The tying silk is the structural basis or skeleton of the fly. The rest - wings, hackle, whisks, dubbing, quill, floss, and what not, are all accessories which are fitted into the silk at various stages according to the type of fly to be dressed. Experience only, and the study of good models, can teach the novice how and when to fit these accessories to the best effect for the special purposes of the water for which the fly is required.

Processes in Outline – A fly may be begun in four different ways, viz.:- (1) At the shoulder; (2) at the middle of the hook; (3) at the tail; and (4) in the case of an eyed hook only, at the head. And it can be finished in three places, viz.:- (1) At the head; (2) at the shoulder behind the hackle; and (3) at the tail.

Beginning at the shoulder one can work to the tail and back to the head and finish there, or return to the shoulder and finish there, or the process may be reversed. Beginning at the middle, one can work to the head and back to the tail and finish there, or return to shoulder or head and finish there. Beginning at the tail one can work to the head and finish there or at the shoulder. Beginning at the head of an eyed hook, one can work to the tail and finish there, or return to shoulder or head and finish there.

In any case these two rules should be observed; (1) That there should be no knot or hitch in the tying silk from the start until the finish, and (2) that that finish should be the whip finish here described. It is the only safe finish and is executed as follows:-

The Whip Finish – The fly, being finished all except the fastening of the silk, take the silk between the forefinger and thumb of the right hand, about two inches from the hook, bring the loose end round the little finger of that hand, and over the backs of the fingers, and lay it along the hook so that it will be tied down by the next lap in the silk. Then go on winding the silk for three or four laps over the loose end, extricate the gut, if any, from the successive turns of the silk, and taking the loose end of the silk in the left hand, draw it towards the left till all the silk has been drawn through and the finish is quite firm. Then varnish to finish. The varnish may also be applied by putting a drop on the silk near the fly just before pulling it through.

The Parts – Wings for Wet-flies – Wings are of many types. They are either split, solid, or rolled; single, double, or treble, or even thicker; and they either show the upper or under surface of the feather on the outside. They can, within limits, be of any degree of fineness or breadth. Rolled wings, reversed wings, Tweed upright wings (to coin a term), Irish wings, and Drake wings require special methods of tying. All other wings are here classed as ordinary. Wings are usually cut from the quill feathers (primary or secondary) of birds, but in some birds, where the primaries and secondaries are of too coarse a texture, smaller feathers of suitable quality are found.

Split wings, and indeed most wings, are best dressed from corresponding feathers taken from opposite sides of the same bird; but many dressers merely double the fibre cut from one feather, and coax it into shape when tied on. Ordinary wings are tied in at the head, projecting over the bend of the hook; and where feathers from opposite sides of a bird are used, the part of the feather which was nearest the root of the stalk should be nearest the head of the fly.

In tying on ordinary wings the fibre used for the wing is grasped firmly in the forefinger and thumb of the left hand, and brought down on the hook so that the fibres are nearly as possible parallel with the shank. The silk is then brought up between the thumb and the hook, over the silk, and down between the hook and the forefinger; the fibre and the hook are again grasped firmly, and the silk is brought down with a firm pull, or four turns closely towards the head.

Rolled wings, reversed wings, and Irish wings are tied in projecting over the head of the fly.

Rolled wings are made of two little rolls of fibre from the wing of a bird, and it is distinctive of this method that they must be tied onto a silk basis, all other wings being tied on the bare hook. Reversed wings are merely ordinary or rolled wings tied on, projecting over the head of the fly. What are here called Tweed upright wings are made of two or more thicknesses of feather laid one over another, doubled, and then tied on as ordinary wings. The fibre is then divided into two equal parts, and the silk passed between the two parts and round under head and shoulder to keep the wings apart. Rolled wings and reversed wings are kept apart in the same way.

Irish wings are made of a doubled slip of feather tied in, projecting over the head of the fly. The

rest of the fly is then dressed and the wing feather is then brought back to slope over the tail, and bound down with the silk and secured by the whip finish.

The wings of Mayflies or Drakes are from the breast feathers of mallard, Canadian wood duck, Rouen drake, or Egyptian goose, and are tied in by the stalks.

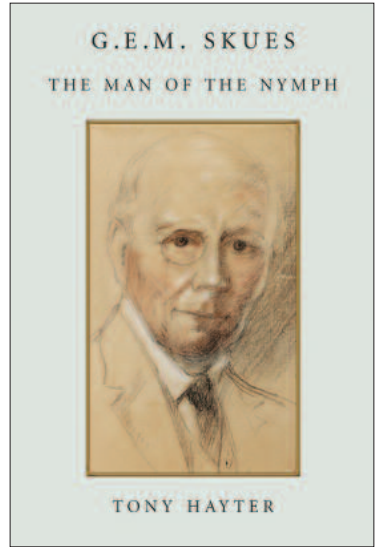
Wings for Dry Flies – Wings for floating flies are of three kinds besides Mayflies – all split and all put on more or less upright – ordinary, reversed, and rolled. They are also single, or double (except the rolled, which are manifold), and they present either the upper or under side of the feather on the outside. The upper side is the more usual side to show, as the outward curve of the feather thus tied makes the wings sit like a V, and they serve as a parachute to let the fly down cocked upon the water. The detailed manipulation of these wings is dealt with later in the section devoted to dressing floating-flies on eyed hooks.

Bodies – The bodies of flies are simulated either with plain tying silk waxed with dark or colourless wax, or with the same covered to partly covered with dubbing, floss silk, quill (so-called – the strands from the eye or tail herl of a peacock stripped of its metallic flue or the enamel of the stalks of feathers), herl, and tinsel, and are ornamented with ribbings of silk, gold, or silver wire or tinsel, or with tags of gold or silver tinsel. The method of winding on dubbing has been previously described. The material for winding on as bodies is usually tied in at the tail projecting to the left, and is thence wound to the shoulder and secured. Herl is usually tied on three or four or more strips together, and then the strips are twisted from right to left round and so as to adhere to the tying silk, and so wound up the body and secured at the shoulder.

Legs – These are simulated either with hackles, or by picking out dubbing. Poultry hackles require no preparation except the stripping of the down at the root. But the soft hackle of other birds must be stroked backwards to enable the fibres to separate freely as the hackle is being wound. Cock hackles are sometimes doubled by drawing all the fibres to one side of the stem, the stem being held by one end in the vice and by the other in the hackle pliers. Soft hackles, if too thick or of irregular shape, are often stripped of the plume on that side which will be under when the hackle is wound. Every hackle should be tied in so that it can be wound on its edge, and with the best side towards the head of the fly.

Hackles are tied in by either the stalk or the point. Most modern dressers tie in the stalk and wind the hackle by the point, which is seized in the pliers for the purpose. Every hackle should be wound in the same direction as the silk is wound. Thus, if the silk is whipped over the hook and away from the operator, the hackle should be wound in the same direction, and *vice versa*.

Whisks – Three or four fibres of saddle or beard hackle of a cock, soft and flexible for wet flies, stiff and glassy for floating flies, or two or three fibres of a gallina neck or breast feather dyed or plain for floaters, are taken in the left hand when the whipping approaches the bend of the hook, and the butt ends being passed under the hook the silk is brought over the hook and found underneath again; then under the whisk fibres, close, to make them sit up.



This book is a recent biography and is considered to be the best

Processes In Detail – Dressing Flies On Gut

To Tie a Hackle Fly hackled at Shoulder Only –

Fix your hook firmly in the vice by the barb and the lower part of the bend, with the shank end projecting to the right. Double 15 or 18 inches of tying silk round the hook and twist the ends lightly together, and then wax the silk by rubbing the wax up and down the doubled and twisted length two or three times. Then separate and untwist the silk at the eye and draw it apart against the hook. Take a length of gut and bite one end so as to ensure the process is alike for all flies to be dressed on gut. Then, holding one end of the silk in the left hand, and taking the silk in the right 3 or 4 inches from the left, pass it over the hook, and holding firmly by the left hand, whip under and round the hook, beginning where the shoulder of the fly should be (leaving about one-sixth of the shank bare to take the hackle and the head), and bind down the short length of the silk with three or four successive lappings, close together, but moving towards the bend of the hook.

The short end may now be taken off by a smart twitch towards the head of the hook. Next pass the bitten end of the gut athwart under the hook, bring the silk firmly round it for the next turn, and it will lie straight under the hook. Pull it until the bitten end is under the middle of the hook, and then whip in close firm turns to near the bend. Bind on the whisks, if any, as described; then the silk, or floss, or quill, or herl for the body and the rib, if any, or roll on the dubbing as described, and lap firmly back to the shoulder. Then take the hackle, prepared as described, a little longer in fibre than the hook shank, and lay it face downwards on the hook with the stem towards the bend, and the plume projecting over the gut, and bind the stem down firmly with two or three turns of silk. Twitch off the stump of the stem, wind the body material or ribbing or both to the shoulder and secure them with two turns of silk, and cut away the waste. Then, taking the point of the hackle in the hackle pliers, and passing the middle finger of the right hand through the ring of the pliers, hold the stem of the hackle at right angles to the hook, and turn the hackle on its edge in the same direction as the silk is wound, two, three, or four times round the hook, each turn close in front of or behind the last. Wind the silk through the hackle so as to bind down each successive turn, and, having reached the head, either finish with the whip finish, or, after three or four turns to form the head, whip back through the hackle and finish with the whip finish behind the shoulder. Cut away the point of the hackle and varnish to finish, and the fly is complete. A variant of this method of finishing behind the shoulder is, after binding on the hackle to whip under the hackle up to the head, to take two turns back from the head, wind the hackle up to the silk, whip the silk through it, and finish behind the hackle.

To Dress a Winged Fly hackled at Shoulder Only -

Is identical with tying a Hackle Fly hackled at Shoulder Only, except that a little more space is left at the head for the wings and as a last step before the whip finish, a pair of ordinary wings are whipped on with several firm turns of silk, and the fly is finished with a whip finish at the head or behind the hackle, and the wing stumps are cut off close.

Floating Flies – For floating flies, eyed hooks present such advantages that it is proposed to treat the subject as synonymous with floating flies on eyed hooks. For those who prefer to dress them on gut, it is only necessary so to bind on the gut as to leave the silk in position to proceed with the rest of the fly in the same places as those in which one begins on an eyed hook in the following methods.

The insects imitated are the same in both methods save that the March Brown is never seen on many dry-fly waters. The artificial patterns differ from wet fly patterns (1) in being more thickly

dressed in hackle and wing, (2) in being as far as possible so constructed as to absorb little water and to throw it off readily in drying, and (3), in the winged patterns, in the wings being split and so built as to let the fly down on the water with the wings upright and cocked.

It will be convenient first to describe the process of winging, of which there are several varieties, but all are available for every kind of winged floater except Mayflies.

Beginning near the eye, but leaving room for the head and wings, whip towards the tail six or seven turns, binding down the short end and thence back to the starting point. Twitch off the short end. Take corresponding feathers from opposite sides of the same bird, and cut slips from each to form single or double or rolled wings, as the case may be. If the wings are to be double lay two slips from the same feather or from adjoining feathers from one wing and lay one on top of another so that the points and edges correspond. Do likewise with the other wing. Then lay the feather for one wing precisely on the top of the feather for the other, and take them up in the pliers, place them crosswise between the finger and thumb, so that if the wings be ordinary, they slope backwards with the natural curve of the feather towards the tail, and if they are to be reversed or rolled they project over the eye, and bring down the feather on to the hook. Bring the silk up between the thumb and the feather, down again between the feather and finger on the far side, hold the feather firmly with the finger and thumb and draw down the silk firmly, pass it once round, and behind or in front of the wing, and release the feather. The wings should now set apart in a V shape. Bring the silk up between the near stump and the metal, pass between the wings and down on the far side, round under the hook, back between the wings, and down between the wire and the further stump, then back to the other side of the wing. If the wing be ordinary, draw back the stumps, bind them under the hook, and in any case cut off slantingly so as to taper the body towards the tail. There are many variations in this method for which space is not available.

To dress a Winged Floating Fly hackled at the Shoulder only –

Having tied on the wings as previously described, next tie in at the shoulder so as to pass when wound either in front of the wings or immediately behind them one cock's hackle, in the former case face or bright side downwards, in the latter case with bright side flat against hook and wing. Tie in a second cock's hackle to wind behind the wing, whip to near the bend of the hook, breaking or cutting off the roots of the hackle *en route* so as to taper the body. Bind in the whisks at the tail and take one turn under them. Then tie down herl, quill, floss, tinsel, or whatever the body material is to be (except dubbing), and the ribbing, if any, and whip back to the shoulder. If dubbing be used, spin on the dubbing before whipping back. Wind the body material and ribbing, if any, to the shoulder. Make fast at the shoulder with two turns of silk. Wind the hinder hackle so as to force the wings upright and bring the silk through so as to secure the turns. Wind the front hackle, secure it in like manner, and finish at the head with the whip finish. Some dressers only use one hackle wound altogether and partly behind the wings, and they finish with the whip finish, or two turns behind the wings. The latest novelty is to use yet a third hackle, a hen's or other soft plumaged bird's in front of the wings, or in wingless hackled floaters instead of them.

(The original article continues on to give detailed descriptions of the tying of a number of other types of flies. Space doesn't allow us to print them all. But we've read enough to appreciate that Skues was a very knowledgeable and skilled fly tier. He was certainly one of the titans of our fly fishing history and deserves the accolades. Thank you again Mick for providing us with a great contribution.)

Our Warrnambool Colleagues in Twizel

(... from Jim Blakeslee)

Does this airport experience sound familiar to VFFA members who've made recent fishing trips to New Zealand? Bob Loch, Chris Beaton, Alan Richardson and I flew into Queenstown on April 4. Our flight had departed Melbourne an hour late – annoying. Still, it was a beautiful, sunny day when we landed. But then things became irksome again. New Zealand customs inspectors must really love their job, or were having their annual performance review, because they were VERY thorough and did their best to delay us at the airport, taking all of our gear out for a painstaking and finicky examination. They even turned out pockets and removed every bit of fluff and seed from our fly vests, and scraped the tiniest specks of dirt from our boots and waders before finally sending us off to load our bags onto the X-ray machine. At last we were cleared and made our way to the rental car counter. Then the staffer at the counter gazed at the ceiling while informing us that the two cars we had booked weren't quite ready. "Have a coffee and come back in 20 minutes." Grumble, grumble ... very annoying. Half an hour later we were handed the keys and sent on our way.

We escaped the airport and the next stop was the Frankton Shopping Centre. After cashing up with NZ dollars at the ATM we did a quick circuit of the supermarket, loaded a week's supply of tucker and liquid refreshment into the trolley, left plenty of the recently acquired NZ money at the checkout, and hit the road to Twizel. Two and a half hours of driving and we were finally there.

We were staying at a house owned by local guide Steve Carey. It's spacious with all the self-contained facilities a group of fishermen need, and it has suited us for a number of years. Steve had just arrived home. He was battling a heavy chest cold, and had just returned from taking a client (a female Canadian fishing guide) up the Dobson River. It had been a glorious day and she had landed nine large rainbows.

Steve indicated that the weather was predicted to deteriorate over the next couple days, but the forecast of overcast and drizzle would probably be good for a mayfly hatch. He suggested we try the Tekapo, the lower Grey and lower Ahuriri rivers. The dam wall at Lake Tekapo was being repaired and a heavy release of water down the Tekapo River had flushed out the Didymo and cleaned up the rocks. As a result it was fishing the best it had in years. We thanked him, unpacked the cars and moved into our rooms.

We settled around the dinner table, tucked into steak and salad, and planned the next day. Chris and Alan opted for the bottom of the Ahuriri near Lake Benmore, while Bob and I decided to give the Ahuriri below the bridge at Omarama a try. Fly boxes were pulled out and we pondered which patterns had produced well for us during past April trips. #16 Parachute Adams and a CDC Parachute Dun were top of my dry fly list if mayflies were hatching, with #12 Royal Wulff good when cicadas were about. I had also tied up some new #6 Black Cicadas to try. The nymph list was topped by #16 Pheasant Tails, Quill Gordons, Black Martinez and #14 gold beadhead Hare's Ear. There was one new addition - I was impressed by the look of Peter Lapsley's Pheasant Tail Nymph showcased in the VFFA December 2013 Newsletter, and I showed the guys the dozen of size 16s I had tied up for the trip. As it turned out, over the next six days I caught most of my fish on the CDC Parachute Dun and the Lapsley Nymph.

With a cool breeze, a bit of drizzle and overcast the next morning, we knew it was going to be



A stunning view of a New Zealand lake

hard work for our first day's fishing. The weather would make polaroiding tough, if not impossible, so covering the likely spots and hoping to see fish coming up during a dun hatch was the best we could hope for. At the end of the day we debriefed, settling around the table with a beer or G&T while chicken and veggies roasted in the oven. Chris and Alan had tried the river mouth at Benmore, but the wind off the lake was in their faces, making it unpleasant and casting difficult. They ended up fishing upstream and had seen some good fish but had missed their few opportunities and ended up skunked. Bob and I had walked for an hour to get to the start of our favourite beat on the lower Ahuriri. Conditions were tough, but Bob covered the water with weighted nymphs and ended up with a nice rainbow and a brown.

I managed to polaroid a fish straight away, stalked it and landed an ugly, poxy 2 lb, spawned out salmon on a beadhead Hare's Ear. The next two were better - a nice brown and a rainbow on the Lapsley nymph, caught by casting into broken water. Then - a miracle: the duns started hatching and the sun came out briefly. I took advantage of the break in the weather to polaroid a nice glide and spotted a couple of 3½ lb browns actively taking duns. On went the CDC Dun and I went to work. The first fish sipped the fly and went berserk when I struck, jumping then racing under some willows on far side, breaking me off. Bummer! After drying my fly I waded into position behind the second fish further up the glide. It wasn't as lucky as the first. I presented the fly a metre above the fish and a bit to the right. He turned, followed the fly down, checking it out. It must have looked the real deal because he sipped down the dun and turned upstream again. I struck and the battle was on! I gave plenty of side strain to keep him out of the willows, and eventually skidded a well-conditioned Ahuriri brown onto the gravel, then slipped out the hook and let him go to fight another day. By then the sun was gone again, and thus the polaroiding was

much tougher. I eventually found a pod of 3 lb rainbows at the intersection of two braids and pulled out four in a 20 metre stretch of broken water, upstream nymphing the Hare's Ear trailed by a Lapsley nymph. The light was fading so it was time to make tracks back to the car.

Day two: Bob and Alan decided to head to the Tekapo to see if the fishing was as good as Steve had suggested. They ended up having a ball, Bob landing six and Alan nine. There was a great hatch and the terns and swallows were working over the best runs, like in the good-ol'-days. 2 – 4 lb browns were on station, methodically rising to duns in the tail of each pool. The Parachute Adams was the fly that worked for them.

Chris and I opted to do a “hike down memory lane” into the gorge section on the Upper Ahuriri. Chris hadn't fished it for years and was keen to see it again. We ended up having a mostly sunny day, saw lots of lovely country, polaroided monster trout and hooked some big ones, but had to settle for landing a few 3 - 4 lb rainbows and browns each. I found the rainbows particularly partial to the #6 Black Cicada pattern that I had tied up. Chris did well with a #12 Kakahi Queen. Unfortunately he stepped into a hole on the way back to the car, and fell over and broke his ankle with about 2 km left to walk. Luckily he had two trekking poles and managed to hobble the rest of the way, though was obviously suffering. So, on the drive back to Twizel I made an emergency stop at the Omarama pub to get a bottle of Mr Walker to provide Chris some liquid pain relief. After a swig or two, amazingly it worked! There were quite a few stories to tell around the dinner table that night as Alan served up his lamb roast.



Jim with another superb South Island brown



Chris hobbling back to the car with a broken ankle. Nice water in the background

Day 3: Chris was in distress and could hardly walk, so Alan took him to the Twizel Clinic. The doctor suggested an X-ray at the hospital at Timaru, about 2½ hours drive. So no fishing that day for Chris and Alan. That evening Alan was putting the finishing touches on dinner in the kitchen while Chris rested on the sofa sipping a G&T when Bob and I arrived home, tired but very pleased with our day. Chris had a nice white cast on his right leg and said he had strict doctor's orders to keep the foot elevated and not to put any weight on it.

Bob and I had driven to the Tekapo near the junction with the Mary Burn and Grey River. In spite of drizzly and dull conditions we had a brilliant day's fishing. There was a full-on dun hatch, and we fished mainly the tails of the pools on the Tekapo and Grey to rising fish. The CDC Dun was king and I ended up with 18 fish in the 2 - 4 lb range, and lots of tiddlers. Bob had bagged a heap, too. We were happy anglers when we finally got back to the house for a glass or two and the crumbed, fried trout fillets and steamed rice and salad Alan had waiting for us.

Day 4: we were all back on the Tekapo, including Chris. No way was he going to spend the rest of the trip lying on the sofa, so we waterproofed his cast as best we could. Bob and Alan drove upstream and I took Chris to where we could drive right to the river's edge. Using some crutches he managed to hobble along the bank, resting in a folding chair as needed. He even caught a couple 4 lb browns, which proves you can't keep a keen fisherman down! The rest of us all caught a bag of brownies, too; Alan all smiles with 11.

Day 5: Alan took Chris back to the Tekapo. They each caught and released a heap of 2 - 4 lb browns and the odd rainbow (Did Chris really catch 9??). It was a blue sky day - good for polaroiding. Bob said he had an appointment with some 10 pounders on the upper Ahuriri, so we drove to his favourite section on the Ben Avon Station. I did the shuttle, dropping him off, then picking him up that evening many kilometres upstream. He spotted lots of big fish but they refused all his offerings. I fished the Tarns and a section on the river. The big boys gave me a

hard time, too. Mostly they saw me first and bolted, or panicked the minute I cast or a fly hit the water. The fish there are educated and very hard. Eventually I hooked one thumper on a Lapsley nymph and slugged it out with him in a deep pool until he'd had enough of me, ran up a rapid, jumped and threw the hook. I was devastated! Later I managed to land a couple of 3 lb browns on the CDC, so all was not lost.

Day 6: we had hoped for blue skies and good polaroiding conditions, but not to be. It was overcast but still, so we all drove to the Dobson River on Glen Lyon Station, one of our favourites. Steve Carey didn't have a client that day, so he offered to come along with us, despite a very heavy cough (as it turned out, he went to the doctor the next day and found he had pneumonia!). He showed us a good pool certain to have big rainbows where we could drive to the edge and set Chris up for the day. Chris fished the water carefully and caught two 4 lb beauties. Alan went downstream a few pools, then fished back up to Chris, catching five rainbows along the way. Steve and I walked a couple of pools upstream before starting to look for fish. Bob was in charge of the shuttle that day and drove upstream a few kilometres. He parked near the river and fished up, eventually catching one. In spite of the gloomy conditions, Steve and I spotted some superb fish. I spooked a few, but managed to fool three of them with a Lapsley nymph suspended under a Black Cicada dry, which doubled nicely as a strike indicator. Even though we saw no rises, two fish ignored the nymph and took the Black Cicada. All five were strong well-conditioned rainbows that put up a tremendous fight.

Once back at the house, drinks in hand, the four of us thanked Steve for his hospitality and drank a toast to his good health. Hopefully, we will enjoy another memorable trip like this one in the near future.



Bob Loch did well too



A broken ankle didn't stop Chris

Big River Report

(... compiled from information provided by Richard Kos and Bruce Houghton)

It's a bit of a trek – up the Maroondah Highway to Thornton, head towards Eildon, turn right onto the Eildon-Jamieson Road for the 40 minutes drive around to the Big River bridge, then cross the bridge and turn onto the corrugated teeth-rattling goat track that winds up the valley to the tiny settlement at Enoch's Point. A few more twists and turns and you're there – parked under the trees in front of the magnificent collection of huts and exquisite structures known as Chateau Pilkington. That's where the crew assembled for the annual Big River weekend.



The Big River near Enochs Point

Some 14 members made the trip this year. A few made an early start - Richard Salvado and Richard Kos headed off on the Thursday, catching up with host John Pilkington and chef Stewart Faichney at Healesville, where supplies for the weekend were being loaded on board. Pilks was keen to share his tale about the fish he had interviewed on the river just a week or two earlier. Suffice to say it was huge. And it's still there.

It rained on the Thursday and the river had risen a bit. But despite the drizzle and slightly high and coloured water, Kossy, Pilks and Richard Salvado felt constrained to check the fishing prospects. Kossy used his new one weight Sage, and immediately hooked and landed a brown of 1½ lb on a beadhead caddis pattern. Richard Salvado and Pilks had a few touches but nothing landed. Then Richard unfortunately went for a tumble on the river bank, but emerged without too much damage.



The social centre at Chateau Pilkington

Friday saw more of the crew arriving and the weather fined up to a very pleasant autumn spell with sunny days and light winds. Hugh Maltby arrived with his son David, who was immediately taken out and tutored in the fly fishing arts by Richard Salvado. Kossy fished flashback pheasant tail nymphs and Polish nymphs, resulting in just one fish brought to hand.

But he excelled on the Saturday when he reverted to his green caddis pupa, which clearly appealed to the local trout. His final tally was 10 for the day, with two being hooked and landed whilst demonstrating his nymph under dry fly indicator technique to John Pilkington. Kossy was fishing with a dry fly indicator (eg size 10 Royal Humpy) and a tungsten bead head caddis larva or pupa pattern (lime or olive green, size 12 or 14), hanging under the indicator.

This nymphing method turns into a type of Polish or Czech nymphing style and Kossy describes it as follows: “Let the flies drift back behind you, then take up all of the slack fly line, hold your rod parallel to the river with only the leader and flies in the water, rotate your upper body by ninety degrees with the flies now directly downstream, then lift and re-cast. There are many patterns that can be used to fish the indicator nymph and short line nymphing method. You will find them listed under European patterns with names such as Rhyacophila and Hydropsyche. These patterns are usually heavily weighted with an under body of flat lead. Don’t think you have to purchase specialised gear, as a nine foot five weight can be used quite successfully, as was my one weight.”



Kossy nymphing the edges

The full crew had assembled by the Saturday, and most fished and caught a fish or two.” Hamish caught three after showing his fly box contents to Kossy and having a green caddis pattern spotted and recommended. This was definitely the top fish catcher for the weekend.

On the Saturday Bruce Houghton’s son Corey arrived for the day with his girlfriend Natalie. Corey had recently taken up fly fishing and had purchased a pile of gear on eBay. Bruce and Corey fished together throughout the day, enjoying some delightful water and some success. The Big River can be hard work, with thick vegetation right to the edges in many places and lots of huge boulders to clamber over. But it is scenically magnificent.

A major feature of this annual event is the Saturday Night Dinner – a magnificent roast followed by John Pilkington’s scrumptious sticky date pudding. The ambience can be a bit cool, as the meal is eaten at a huge wooden bench out in the open under the stars, but the nearby roaring fire takes the edge off the chill, and in any case guests hardly notice the temperature because they’re laughing too hard at John’s endless collection of hilarious stories and quirky jokes.



The renowned Saturday evening meal

Late in the afternoon Corey and Natalie were about to set off for the long drive back to Melbourne when Pilks, ever the kind and generous host, insisted they stay for the Saturday night meal. So Natalie joined the motley crew, and became probably the first lady ever to be part of a Big River Dinner.

By the Sunday morning it was done and dusted, and some weary and well-fed anglers packed and left at the end of another fabulous Big River trip.

Lester Walton's Visit to the South Island

I had travelled to New Zealand earlier this year and gathered with family, appropriately on a grey drizzly day in Greymouth, to scatter my mother's ashes.

The weather forecast was dire. The SES crews were dusting off their gumboots and fluoro jackets, and floods and landslides were predicted for the South Island. So my three days of guided fishing booked for the Nelson area in the days that followed were looking very dismal. Fortunately the deluge was anodyne - just enough to discolour the rivers around the district.

We first tried the Sabine where we found lots of unhungry fish, so my guide, no doubt scouring his extensive local knowledge, suggested the back of beyond. So we choppered into the Johnson River, a tributary of the northern branch of the Mokihinui if you know your West Coast rivers.

It was a magic spot, isolated and serene, and with clean water! The walking and wading over and round the unending boulders was tough, and casting was at times demanding. I hooked and then lost way more fish than I landed, but it was great fun. The fish ranged from around 4 to 8 lbs, and were in great pre-spawn condition. Perhaps the most amazing sight was watching two territorial jacks of around 6 lbs fighting. At one point one of these belligerent combatants latched on to the other's belly and they both tumbled down the river thrashing around over the rocks, heads out of the water at times, until they disappeared from view. I was left quite astonished at this (for me) unique phenomenon.



Lester connected



*Some glimpses of Lester's
New Zealand experiences*



FLY OF THE MONTH

The Copper John



According to some reports, the Copper John is the most popular and biggest selling nymph in the USA, so it must have something going for it. New Zealand guide and expert fly tier Peter Carty reports finding it very effective in his South Island rivers. Anglers use it here in Victoria too, and why not. It looks enticing and undoubtedly sinks quickly to where it's needed. It has to be worth a try.

There are a few variations in the various descriptions of the materials used, with the biggest of these being the colour of the copper wire used. The Wapsi Company now produces copper wire in a wide variety of colours, so Copper Johns in green, red, orange, brown, blue, pink and black are now sold.

The fly was originally designed by John Barr, a prominent American trout guide and fly tier. He writes: "The Copper John went through several design changes over a period of about three years beginning in 1993. The early versions caught fish, but I didn't consider it finished until 1996. After trying numerous hook styles, I settled on the Tiemco 5262, a 2XL, 2X heavy hook. I tried other hook styles, but the proportions just came out best on the Tiemco 5262, and it was a strong hook. The original pattern's tail and legs were Hungarian partridge, and the thorax was wrapped peacock herl with an epoxied turkey quill wing case. I first saw epoxy used to coat wing cases years ago on a Callibaetis nymph pattern. The epoxy may give off a little glow that many emerging nymphs and pupae exhibit. I don't know if this makes the fly more effective, but it sure gives it more appeal.

When Wapsi introduced Thin Skin I began to use this instead of turkey quill for the wing case. It is durable, easy to work with, more readily available than turkey, and accepts the epoxy coating better than turkey. To make the fly sink faster I wrapped lead wire on the hook under the thorax. I chose the metal bead, lead, wire abdomen, and slim profile to achieve the fastest sink rate possible. I also added a tapered thread underbody so the abdomen had a nice taper when the wire was wrapped over it. The fly was almost where I wanted it. The final piece was put in place when artist Dave Hall suggested putting a single piece of pearl Flashabou over the top of the Thin Skin before applying the epoxy. The pattern was then finished.”

Materials for the Copper John

(John Barr’s suggested materials. Mr Google provides a number of YouTube videos showing skilled fly tiers putting it all together for those who’d like to see the pattern being tied.)

Hooks: Sizes 10 - 16, preferably Tiemco model 5262.

Thread: Black, 6/0.

Bead: Gold coloured, either brass or tungsten, in the appropriate size for the hook used.

Lead wire: 0.015 for the larger hooks and 0.010 for the smaller hook sizes.

Tail: Dark brown goose biots.

Abdomen: Copper wire, diameter to suit hook size. Colours – copper, dark brown, red, green, ... (John Barr says: “In spring 2001, Wapsi introduced Ultra Wire, a tarnish-proof wire available in a wide assortment of colours. The original copper-coloured fly now shares space in my fly box with Copper Johns tied in red, green, chartreuse, silver, wine, zebra (black and silver), black, blue, and hot pink.)

Thorax: Peacock herl.

Wingcase: Wapsi Black Thin Skin with a single strand of Pearl Flashabou tied in the middle.

Legs: Brown Partridge.

Tying the Copper John

(These notes are mostly from Peter Carty’s description in the book *‘Masters of Fly Tying’*, published by *Fish & Game, New Zealand.*)

1. Place the bead on the hook and put the hook in your vice. Then add 8 – 12 turns of lead wire around the shank. Push the lead along the shank and into the hole at the back of the bead. The lead should extend to about two-thirds the way along the shank to the hook bend.
2. Start your tying thread just behind the lead and wind in even turns to the bend.
3. Choose and prepare two goose biots, place them back to back so that they curve away from each other, and tie them in to form the tail. Trim off the butts.
4. Build up a nice even underbody with the tying thread, covering the lead with thread. This underbody needs to be as smooth as possible, otherwise the wire forming the abdomen will have gaps in it. Tie a half hitch in the thread behind the bead and then cut the thread. Apply a few drops of head cement onto the underbody and spread it out so that it completely covers the thread.

5. Put the spool of copper wire you will use in a bobbin, hold the end of the wire directly over the last thread wraps near the hook bend, and wind the wire forward towards the bead, stopping a couple of turns short of the bead.
6. Reattach the thread behind the bead and make two or three wraps around the wire. Tie off the wire, then take a pair of smooth-faced pliers and gently flatten the wire in the section that is covering the lead.
7. Tie in one strand of Flashabou on top of the hook and bind it down at the point where you intend to start the wingcase. Also tie in a strip of Thin Skin cut to size in the same way.
8. Tie in some peacock herl and wrap it to form the thorax. Select a suitable Brown Partridge feather and pull off 5 - 7 fibres from each side of the feather stem. Tie these fibres in as legs on either side of the thorax behind the bead.
9. Pull the Thin Skin forward to form the wing case and make a wrap of thread to hold it in place. Repeat with the Flashabou and make a couple more tight wraps. Trim the excess of both materials as close to the bead as possible, whip finish behind the bead and cement the wraps with head cement or a drop of superglue.
10. Peter Carty now suggests that you tie up a dozen Copper Johns. Then mix up some five-minute Araldite and apply a small amount to the top of the thorax of each of your finished flies. When they dry they're ready to use.



Two more from the archives



LIBRARY NEWS

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

The library is divided into three parts.

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

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

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

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

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2013 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Pty Ltd • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Bernard Holbery • FlyLife Magazine • Hayes on Brumbys • Hookup Bait and Tackle
- J. M. Gillies Pty Ltd • Mayfly Tackle • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Mountain Stream Company • 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 • Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle

VFFA Meetings & Activities

May 2014

15 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: Rick Dobson**

June 2014

1 Sunday Casting commences at the Red Tag Casting Pools, with competition for the Tom and Frank McDonough Memorial Trophy
8 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
13 Dinner with Partners – at the Celtic Club (Note: this is on a Friday evening this year.)
14 Annual Cane Makers Day
15 Annual Cane Day – at the Red Tag Casting Pools
19 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: TBC**
22 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
25 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
29 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

July 2014

6 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
13 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
17 **General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club – Speaker: TBC**
20 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools
26 Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Annual Dinner
27 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools

August 2014

3 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
10 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
13 Council Meeting – 7:30 pm at the Celtic Club
17 Sunday Casting - at the Red Tag Casting Pools (9:00 am – 1:00pm)
22 **Annual Dinner – Guest Speaker: TBC**
23 President's Casting Day - 10am to 3pm at the Red Tag Casting Pools

September 2014

18 **Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm at the Celtic Club.**

Advance notice – upcoming trips:

Bullen Merri - October 3 – 5

Warrnambool - November 14 – 16

Tasmania 2015 – February 14 – 20

Bairnsdale Donger – Still being negotiated, but possibly in February or March in 2015