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THE VICTORIAN FLY-FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

SEPTEMBER 2010

Organisation No. A0024750J

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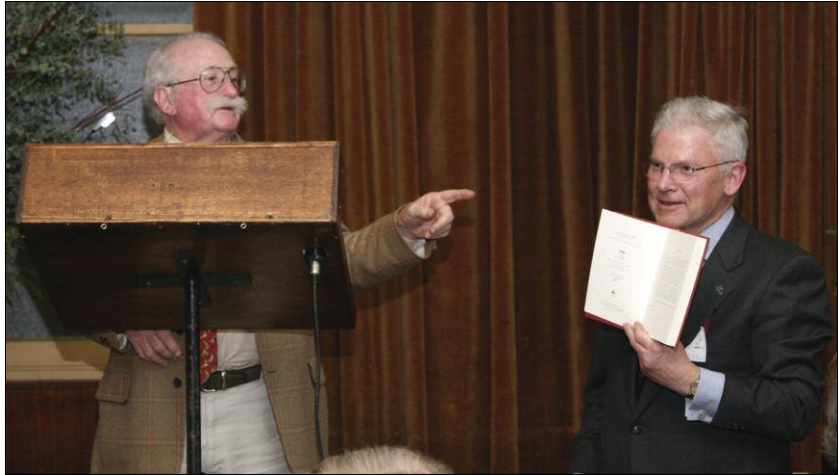
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**NEXT MEETING – THE VFFA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING  
AT THE KELVIN CLUB, 8:00 PM, THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 16, 2010**

## The 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner

Some 96 members and guests gathered at the Kelvin Club on Friday, August 27, for the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner. The focus of the evening was the official release of the VFFA history – *The Country For An Angler*, by Dr Tony Brothers. Accordingly the two guest speakers were Rick Keam, who edited the history, and John Philbrick, who was President from 2002 – 2004 and editor of the newsletter for some 13 years (1995 – 2008).

During the evening Janet Arndt, Tony's partner of many years, was presented with a special 'Author's Copy' of the history, and the Number 1 Special Edition was auctioned. Auctioneer Marty Rogers was in his characteristic scintillating form, and the bidding was keen, with President Peter Boag finally offering the winning bid of \$2,500.



*The number one copy goes under the hammer*



*Ron Dennis with his 50 Year membership certificate*

The evening also saw the presentation of a 50 Year Membership Certificate to Ron Dennis, who travelled down from his home in NSW especially for the occasion.

A traditional feature of the evening is the raffle of equipment and items provided by a number of generous supporters and sponsors. The range of prizes was magnificent, with some superb equipment donated by a supportive team of very generous individuals and companies. Our sincere thanks to them all.



*Peter Dixon and Peter Boag with the trophy won by the Australian fly fishing team at the recent Commonwealth Championships*



*Peter Campbell presenting a fly to Jan Arndt*

And again the staff at the Kelvin Club provided a delectable meal and excellent service, all contributing to another very enjoyable and memorable Annual Dinner.

## **The Donger**

Bairnsdale Fly Fishers' Club will be holding their Annual Dinner on the evening of Friday, February 18, 2011

The Dinner will be followed by a wonderful fishing weekend at their lodge on the Mitta Mitta River. Largest fish caught wins the famous 'DONGER' trophy.

Tea on Saturday will be provided. Further details to follow.

All VFFA members welcome.

## **Advance Notice – October Meeting – Fly Tying**

The October general meeting will be an evening of fly tying. Our expert demonstrators will again be Hubert Reichelt, Peter Campbell, and Andrew Mossman. These very skilled exponents need no introduction – they have demonstrated their fly tying prowess on previous fly tying evenings, when we have all benefited from watching them in action.

These evenings provide ample opportunity to find out about new flies along with the subtle skills and techniques that make complicated patterns easier to tie and more attractive (at least to the trout we hope).



## Guest Speaker - Rick Keam

(This is the text of Rick Keam's talk at the Annual Dinner.)

At times, working on the VFFA history was like being swallowed by a whale, and our whale consisted mainly of paper. In my case, this was mainly old newspapers. During the latter stages of preparation, a wealth of new material became available through the digitisation of early newspaper records.

The most important discoveries went into the book, but with any project like this, there's always a lot of not-so-directly related material that ends up on the 'cutting-room floor'. And some of it is a lot of fun.



*Rick Keam speaking at the dinner*

As an example, there was a mention of Dudley Lee down at Bairnsdale. As of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January 1940, the 'Country News' column of *The Argus* reports that Dudley, aged 11, has been admitted to the District Hospital with a fractured skull and concussion after coming off his father's lorry. However, they've assured his parents that there shouldn't be any lasting consequences from the injury.

Now to 1937 and an exciting chase in Preston. Constable Geake of Preston Police, who lives next door to VFFA member Dr Cyril Crooke, saw a man remove a dynamo from Cyril's garage and make off with it in a horse-drawn lorry. He immediately alerted Cyril and the two of them gave pursuit in Dr Crooke's motor-car and overtook the lorry in Gilbert Road. The man claimed he'd bought the dynamo for two bob. Constable Geake said that was "untrue". (!) Whipping his horses, the man drove away with Constable Geake clinging to the side of the vehicle until St George's Road, where he had to jump off to avoid being crushed against a pole. Eventually the miscreant was apprehended by Doctor Crooke.

What's interesting about this is that Cyril himself hadn't always been on the right side of the law. You will find, in *The Country For An Angler*, a photograph by Dr Alf Trinca showing Cyril and Professor Peter McCallum and an enormous bag of beautiful trout the three of them had taken. Cyril's family had established the property 'Tarnpirr' at Narbethong in 1910, and on Doc Trinca's trips to visit them, he took a strong fancy to the waters of the newly-flooded Maroondah Dam, which was closed to anglers except for members of the Water Board and their mates. As a veteran of the barbed-wire entanglements of wartime France, he determined that no piddling Board of Works fence was going to keep him out. Doc Trinca and his medical friends would arrive after dark, conceal the car in shrubbery, penetrate the defences and fish through until the early hours of morning. Despite the illegality of what they were doing, they fished strictly with fly. And if you count the fish in the photo you'll find there are 30. They'd stopped once they got to the bag limit of 10 per angler! As Bob

Dylan would sing many years later, “to live outside the law you must be honest.”

Now let’s go right back to 1864, the year the *Norfolk* arrived in Melbourne with its cargo of salmon ova and a few trout ova. At the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dinner that year there were over 100 items on the menu. These included delicacies like *vol au vent* of frogs, *fricandeau* of wombat & spinach, curried bandicoot, parakeet patties, & wild rabbit *à la chasseurs*, provided by Mr T. Austin of Barwon Park, who was present at the Dinner and received a number of accolades. Within a few short years, however, the rabbits were already becoming a problem and the Acclimatisation Society was insisting it had nothing to do with introducing them—it was all Austin’s idea!

The last toast of the evening, proposed by Mr H.E. Watts, was to “the Promoters of the great Salmon Experiment”, especially Mr James Youl. As far as Victoria was concerned, he had not the slightest doubt that the salmon might be considered as acclimatised—though in fact they were still being held in the Ice Company’s works in Franklin Street. Never count your chickens until they’ve hatched, and never count your salmon even after they’ve hatched.

Curiously, there was no mention of the trout. Like most of the salmon, they’d gone on to Hobart. But just a couple of years later, after it became clear that the trout had survived and thrived, the Acclimatisation Society of Victoria claimed credit for the inclusion of trout in the *Norfolk* shipment as having being their idea. I won’t dwell on this now because you’ll find it all in the book, and I want to say a few words about Frank Buckland, who gathered about half of those trout ova from fish he netted from an Itchen River tributary on Admiral Sir Henry Keppel’s estate.

Buckland came from the great tradition of English eccentrics. Something of a self-promoter, perhaps, but then he had plenty of self to promote. He was described by a colleague as standing “Four and a half feet in height and rather more in breadth”. On one of the early pages of *The Country For An Angler* you’ll find a painting of him holding the cast of a large salmon. Perhaps, given that he was so ‘vertically challenged’, the salmon looks a bit bigger than it actually was, but it was clearly a fine fish.

Just to his side, you’ll see a parrot in a cage. Buckland had quite a menagerie of animals in his London home, including a meerkat—I have visions of it standing on sentry duty by his front window, scanning the street for approaching strangers—two small monkeys, and the African parrot. He had good voice control of his monkeys, and to keep them out of trouble during the night, before bedtime he would announce “In Your Cage!” in a firm tone and in they would go. He used the same command, a bit more forcefully, whenever they’d created too much mischief and had to be sent for ‘time out’ for a while. On their best behaviour they would groom his Siamese cat as it lay in front of the fire, but on their worst behaviour they’d pull tail feathers out of the parrot. It didn’t appreciate this. Being a smart bird, it learnt to join in and squawk “CAGE! CAGE! IN YOUR CAGE! CAGE!”

Buckland had trained as a surgeon but became a naturalist and popular writer—he was a kind of early forerunner of authors like Gerald Durrell and James Herriot. He had a genuine

delight in animals of all kinds, but also in dissection and taxidermy and eating them. Gastronomic experiments were conducted concerning boiled elephant trunk, rhinoceros pie and stewed mole. On one occasion, after a fishmonger gave him the overnight loan of a three-metre-long sturgeon to make a plaster cast of it, he was trying to lower the fish down his stairs by means of a rope tied to its tail. The rope broke, and in Buckland's words, the sturgeon "went sliding headlong down the stairs like an avalanche down Mont Blanc". It smashed the kitchen door open, slid in and came to rest under the table. "The cook screamed, the housemaid fainted, the cat jumped on the dresser, the dog retreated behind the copper and barked, the monkeys went mad with fright, and the parrot has not spoken a word since."

*(Frank Buckland was appointed Inspector of Salmon Fisheries in 1869 and worked tirelessly against a range of environmental threats. Today the Buckland Foundation, established by his estate, funds a Buckland Professor each year to give three public talks on a matter of current concern to commercial fisheries. See <http://www.glaucus.org.uk/Buckland.htm>)*

There's an Australian connection in all this, because one of Tasmania's Salmon Commissioners was Frank Buckland's cousin John Buckland. And there's a Victorian connection, because *The Argus* records that in January 1869 John Buckland accompanied a consignment of Tasmanian fry to Melbourne, to be divided between Yan Yean and Riddell's Creek. In the longer span of history, there's a VFFA connection as well. John Buckland was the first headmaster of The Hutchins School in Hobart. So it is very appropriate to note that one of the pupils of that school in the 1940s, a small boy who was beginning to form an interest in fishing for trout, was Tony Brothers.

I mentioned before the name of Mr H.E. Watts, after whom the Watts River was named, and it was that river in the 1880s that became the first Victorian location to be promoted as a suitable place for weekend tourists to fly-fish for trout. And the person doing most of the promoting was one George Jenkins, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, although he had to despairingly confess that the fish were more interested in live grasshoppers than any of the English flies he presented to them.

In 1906 *The Argus* reported that a meeting had been held at the Port Phillip Hotel to form a body to be known as the Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association, and that George Jenkins—by then Sir George—was to be its President. In fact the new body decided to call itself the Victoria Fly-Fishers' Association. It subsequently changed name a couple of times, first—in search of a wider constituency—to the Victoria Trout-Fishers' Association, then—after a couple of years' inactivity following the death of George Jenkins—to the Victorian Trout Fishers' Association in 1912, existing under that name until its demise sometime after 1929. It was succeeded by the Victorian Trout Fishermen's Association in 1932, which after only a few months, following the success of its lobbying for a trout licence, adopted the name The Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association. Despite all the minor name changes, there remained clear lines of continuity in terms of the people involved. The VFFA in its present form isn't the oldest continuous fly-fishing body in Victoria—that honour goes to Ballarat Fly-Fishers, who'll be marking their centenary in nine years time—and the Red Tag club is just a few

months older than the re-formed VFFA of the 1930s. But the VFFA in all its predecessor forms has existed now for all but a few of the last 104 years, and that is something to celebrate.

I hope, as Tony hoped, that this work will serve as a sound historical record of the VFFA and the history of fly-fishing in Victoria, but also that it will be a book you can pick up and dip into at any time and find rewarding, and that it becomes a possession to treasure.

## VFFA Meetings & Activities

### **SEPTEMBER 2010**

- 8 Council Meeting
- 16 VFFA AGM**
- 22 Meeting of the new Council

### **OCTOBER 2010**

- 2 & 3 Fly-fishing Conclave at Woodend
- 21 General Meeting: Fly Tying with the Masters**
- 23 Season Opening Trip to a Private Fishery near Ballarat
- 27 Council Meeting

### **NOVEMBER 2010**

- 5 - 7 VFFA Trip to Warrnambool
- 18 General Meeting: Guest Speaker – David Featherstone**
- 24 Council Meeting

### **DECEMBER 2010**

- 8 Council Meeting
- 16 Christmas Dinner: Guest Speaker – Peter Morse**

## VFFA Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the VFFA will be held at the Kelvin Club on Thursday, September 16, commencing at 8:00 pm sharp. A formal notice of Annual General Meeting, nomination form and form of Appointment of Proxy are included with this newsletter. The business of the evening will include the election of office bearers for 2010 / 2011 – the president, senior vice-president, junior vice-president, librarian, editor, secretary, treasurer, and council members.

All members are encouraged to stand for office.

Members and their guests are encouraged to have dinner at the Kelvin Club prior to the meeting. This makes for an enjoyable social evening. Please try to be seated in the dining room by 6:30 pm.

# President's Message

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This is my last monthly President's Report. It has been a very busy two years, and I have benefited enormously from the experience.

The August Annual Dinner is the premier date on the VFFA calendar, and this year's dinner, the night of the release of the long awaited history, *The Country For An Angler*, was no exception. It was a very good evening, and thoroughly enjoyed by the ninety-six attendees.

Many members would be aware that Tony Brothers, the author, sadly passed away two weeks prior to the evening. Whilst adding an air of poignancy to the evening, it was however a happy occasion as a celebration of Tony's achievement in writing the book.



We enjoyed a very funny speech from the book's editor Rick Keam, followed by a typically dry and witty John Philbrick. Both gentlemen received a handsome fly tied and presented by Peter Campbell, who follows in Tony Brothers' footsteps in thanking the speakers and presenting the fly at these functions. Rick and John were excellent choices as speakers for the evening, and both had given a lot of thought to the content they presented.

Tony's partner, Jan Arndt, was presented with a leather bound "Author's Copy", and replied with a heartfelt thank you to all for being invited to receive the copy. She talked about Tony's contribution to, and what he received in return from his association with the VFFA. Peter Campbell presented Jan with a fly, and related how proud he felt that Tony requested him to follow in his footsteps in this role at the Annual Dinner.

Australian Fly Fishing Team Captain, Peter Dixon, kindly brought along the trophy won by the Australian Team competing at this years Commonwealth Championships held in Wales during June and July. The trophy was of a magnificent leaping brown trout, and I hope more than a few attendees took the opportunity to have a look at it on the night.

The raffle is a big part of the evening. The quality of the lots has a lot to do with this, and again, a big thank you to the donors. It is no accident we received very good monies from ticket sales. I encourage all members to support our donors by going to the local tackle shops. We all know about the web, but nothing beats your local tackle dealer to find out first hand where the fish are rising and what fly is working.

Thanks to Hughie Maltby and his band of ticket sellers. The merchandise table was also well promoted, and a pleasing amount of product was sold. We do operate on a tight budget, and the raffle and merchandise sales are a very important part of our income.

Ron Dennis was welcomed into the 50 year member club, and presented with a certificate recognizing his years of membership.

A pleasant surprise attendee was David Grisold. Choco was planning on being out of the country, but he and wife Rhonda had to unfortunately return to Australia early to be with Rhonda's very ill father, who passed away within hours of their arrival home. Choco has played a very crucial role in getting the History published, and it was both fitting and fortuitous he was present at the release.

It was a memorable evening, and one which Tony Brothers would have been proud of.

Many VFFA members attended the funeral service for Tony. One of his great fishing mates from the VFFA, Iven Affleck, was one of the eulogists, and he related some lovely anecdotes about Tony and his fly-fishing. Iven has kindly provided a tribute to Tony elsewhere in this newsletter. The VFFA has lost one of its favourite sons, but his authorship of the history will be a lasting legacy to his memory. I have read the book, and can thoroughly recommend it. It is very easy to dip into, and I encourage everybody to consider purchasing a copy.

Following the Annual Dinner, Saturday at the Red Tag Pool provided the venue for a very pleasant President's Casting Day. It provides an opportunity to enjoy the company of fellow members, savour another of Peter Campbell's barbecues, enjoy his fruit pies, and cast to the rings for the Frank and Tom McDonough Memorial Trophy. Don Urquhart was the early leader but was pipped at the post by octogenarian Colin Morrison. Well done Colin!

In his inimitable style, Joe Haslauer ran the day seamlessly, and we owe him a big debt of gratitude for his organization of this day, and also Sunday Casting through the winter months.

The season will have opened by the time of receiving this newsletter. Early signs are very promising, with the better rains and recent heavy snowfalls. Both the streams and impoundment waters should provide good fishing this season.

Please read the newsletter to see what is coming up in the next few months. The September Meeting is the A.G.M. and I hope to see a good roll up of members for what is a very enjoyable evening.

Tight lines,

*Peter Boag*

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## Some VFFA Fishing Events ...

### ***The Season Opener***

The traditional Season Opener this year is scheduled for Saturday October 23, and the venue is a private lake near Ballarat. Richard Kos is convening this event, and members keen to attend should contact Kossy on (mob) 0430 091 300, or (Home) 9744 2375 to indicate their interest.

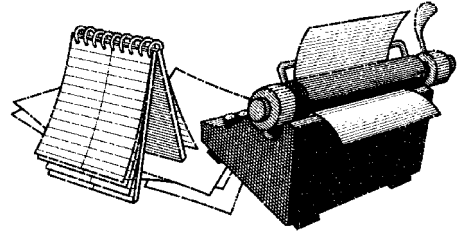
### ***The Warrnambool Trip***

A new venture this year, members of the VFFA have been invited to join with the members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers to fish some of those wonderful streams in the Western District – the Hopkins, Merri, Moyne and Mt Emu rivers and streams in particular. Jim Blakeslee and other Warrnambool members have very kindly offered to act as guides to show us city dwellers where their best fishing is. An opportunity not to be missed!

The date – Saturday November 6 to Monday November 8.

The plan is to book cabins at one of the large caravan parks in Warrnambool. The convenor is Hugh Maltby, and members interested in attending should phone Hugh on (mob) 0400 887 065 or (home) 9459 2241.

# From the EDITOR'S DESK



The Annual 4WD and Fishing Show was held in early September, and I spent the first day of the event assisting Tom White at the fly casting area. Tom is President of Yarra Valley Fly Fishers and secretary of the Australian Trout Foundation. He runs regular fly casting schools with the Yarra Valley club and is quite skilled at teaching novices the basics of casting. It was a long day – we had a continuous stream of aspirants who were keen to try their hand, and for many it was their first encounter with a fly rod. Particularly pleasing was that a significant number of our customers (who received a free lesson with all equipment provided) were young – teenagers and others not much older. And they enjoyed the experience, with many indicating they were keen to get hold of some gear and pursue fly-fishing as a sport. This is heartening news, as interest in fly-fishing in recent days seems to be in some sort of decline. One measure of this is that the real estate devoted specifically to fly equipment in many tackle shops is shrinking, and the merchants report that ‘soft plastics are now the go’. So a resurgence of interest in fly-fishing among young anglers is very welcome indeed.

It's been a wet start to the new trout season. The heavens keep opening and we're ‘enjoying’ the best rainfall figures for many years. As a result some of our favourite stillwaters, so sadly depleted over recent years, are now brimming. Newlyn's, for example, was down almost to a puddle, and the once brilliant Hepburn was dry land. Now both are close to full. But what about their trout? Unfortunately the DPI trout allocation and stocking program was set in concrete several months ago, and didn't include many of these recovering stillwaters, as the extent of the rains had not been anticipated. Fortunately the ATF has taken up the issue, and there is a possibility that some trout for these recovering stillwaters can be found. It's early days, but if all goes well the next issue of our newsletter might have some encouraging news.

This year's Annual Dinner was a wonderful occasion, featuring of course the release of *The Country For An Angler*, the official VFFA history authored by Tony Brothers. Sadly, Tony wasn't present to see the official release of the book that has occupied countless hours of his time. So it is only fitting that much of this newsletter is given to recording Tony's life, and his contribution to the VFFA, including his history of the VFFA.

It is also very sad to report that other recent bereavements have touched the families of VFFA members. We would all offer our sincere sympathies and condolences to Rhonda and David Grisold. Rhonda's father passed away on August 23, and Rhonda and David cut short their holiday in Europe to fly home for the funeral. We also learned that Dudley Lee, a VFFA member of many years and stalwart of the Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club, passed away in late August. Peter Campbell, a close friend of Dudley's, has offered to write a tribute for the October newsletter.

Finally, the September AGM sees a changing of the guard, with Peter Boag retiring as President. Peter's two years as President coincided with my first two years as editor, and while expressions of gratitude and appreciation will undoubtedly be conveyed to Peter by others for his countless selfless hours of work over these two years, it wouldn't be out of place for me to express some words of my own. Peter has been a strong support, a wise counsellor, and a constant source of encouragement. His regular phone calls, ‘just touching base’, were always

appreciated, and his warmth and friendship and incredible generosity have been greatly valued. Thank you Peter for all you've done.

*Lyndon Webb*

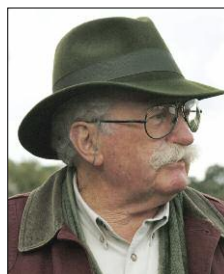
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## President's Casting Day

The day following the Annual Dinner is, by long tradition, set aside for the 'President's Casting Day'. Thus, on Saturday August 28, some 35 slightly enervated but optimistic wavers of the long wand gathered at the Red Tag Casting Pools to demonstrate their form. The weather was pleasant, though a flukey and gusting breeze blew straight into the faces of contestants to add another difficulty to the challenge of getting that tiny bit of fluff into those very small hoops (or at least they appeared to be way too small). But despite the elements, spirits weren't at all dampened (though a few were consumed), and the casting proceeded apace.



The event is officially the 'Handicap Event for the Tom and Frank McDonough Memorial Trophy', and accordingly there was plenty of serious endeavour. It is pleasing to report that the eventual winner was our recently retired club secretary, Colin Morrison. Colin modestly attributed his success to the fact that he was the last contestant, and at this point in the afternoon the wind had died. He also assured us that it had nothing to do with the fact that he was the official scorer and keeper of records.



The day provided a delightful opportunity to enjoy the company of fellow members, to review the various post mortems on another very successful Annual Dinner, and to appreciate the magnificent work of chef Peter Campbell, who never fails to impress. The success of the occasion was due to some hard work by a number of members, and particularly Joe Haslauer, who set up the casting materials, Peter Campbell, who cooked the lunch, and Colin Morrison, who acted as chief scorer. Our sincere thanks to them all.

## Dr R. A. (Tony) Brothers

(Iven Affleck represented VFFA members with the following eulogy, given at Tony Brothers' funeral. Iven was a close friend of Tony's and they spent many hours together).

I was fortunate to know Tony for half of my life and almost half of his. I came to know him as a fly-fisherman and fly tier first - then as a companion, friend, and mentor.

He tells a story of how, about forty years ago, he fell in the river up at Falls Creek. Nothing unusual about that - we had to pull him out more than once. But this time he was alone, the water was cold, he got stuck under a log, injured his arm, and then had to drive himself to hospital - one-armed - over mountain roads. I don't care to think of what we would have missed had we lost him then.

Tony was a lovable character - intelligent, incredibly knowledgeable, talented, energetic and lovable. He was capable yet impractical, wise yet naïve - and lovable. Irascible, argumentative, persistent, passionate - and lovable.

He loved fly-fishing. He loved the Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association. He loved the men of the VFFA - both past and present.



He left a 35-year legacy of unparalleled service and dedication to the VFFA, culminating in the recent publication of the history he wrote of the Association; a Herculean task no-one else had ever attempted. It will be a great and lasting tribute to him.

He has received all the honours of the VFFA. They were well-deserved, and then some.

He loved company. A more gregarious, humorous and delightful companion would be hard to find. How well we remember his 70th birthday party at the Kelvin Club a couple of year's ago. Tony's partner and long time companion, Jan, organised a wonderful night of celebration, with many friends and family enjoying a great night of live music and good company, with Tony at the centre of things. It was Tony's good fortune that he had Jan sharing his life and mutual interests in his last years.

As a colleague I would like to dwell a little on Tony's professional life. He held the highest standards. He was a very good dental surgeon, and in a world of changing values he was uncompromising, dealing with his patients skilfully, compassionately and fairly. He felt his responsibility to them deeply. I admired his integrity immensely.

He displayed this quality in all of his interests. He liked things done properly. He was a stickler for doing the “right” thing. He liked his jazz traditional. He liked his fly tying traditional and true to its origins. His preferred fly-fishing style was traditional dry fly. He was our conscience when we tried some new fad or technique that was “not sporting” in his opinion.

Tony always hoped and expected that things would be right, and when they were not he was not philosophical about it. Tony was a great complainer. In fact he could have ‘complained for Australia’. If it wasn’t the heat and the flies, it was the cold and the wind. Or it was probably the politicians who were to blame. I will surely miss his grizzles as much as his laughter.



Let me relate with great affection a few of the myriad “Tony stories”. I am sure all of Tony’s fishing mates will agree that to get him organised for a day’s fishing was akin to getting a three-year-old off to kinder. First you would have to find his gear, then help him get into it, and before setting off, check that he had not left anything behind - all the while listening to Tony chatting about something else. On arriving at the river and finding a trout rising, Tony would declare, “He’s mine - you go and find your own.”

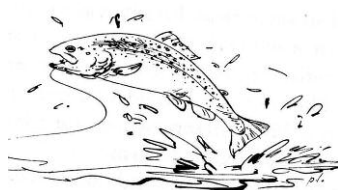
On one occasion we were woken one morning in the shack by a stifled scream from Tony. He had blood all over his legs and was desperately trying to get out of his sleeping bag. Frantically he threw an object about the size of a plum onto the floor. We soon realised what it was - Tony had gone to bed with a leech on his toe! Suffice to say, while we all fell about laughing, Tony was very colourful in his description of us and our parents.

Finally, let me tell you of our last day out in Tasmania, where he and Janet had set up a home base in Evandale from which Tony was going to sally forth to fish his beloved rivers. After studying a map of roads and rivers, we decided to explore the opportunities some distance up in the hills and eventually drove off the road and down to the river. The closer we got the better it looked - and it was good! No signs of other fishermen having been there earlier. Nice flow and insects about - Tony was in his element. He caught one fish and raised another.

This was last October and it was still cold, but when the weather warmed up, this was to be Tony’s secret spot. He was excited by the prospect.

Alas, it never came to pass. Now, if anyone wishes to know this secret spot of Tony’s, you’ll just have to ask him yourself when you see him next.

*Iven Raife Affleck*



# Vale - Robert Anthony (Tony) Brothers

*(October 10, 1938 – August 13, 2010)*

Tony was born in New Norfolk, Tasmania, to Jean and Charles. His father was a psychiatrist and head of the department of Mental Hygiene for Tasmania. They lived in the large residence attached to the mental hospital in New Norfolk, where Tony's early memories of trout and fly-fishing were gained.

They also lived in "Taroona House" – a beautiful home on the coast, south-west of Hobart. Tony fondly remembered his childhood days fishing and adventuring on the nearby beaches. He attended the Hutchins School in Hobart.

The family moved to Melbourne in 1951 where his father took up an appointment at Kew Cottages, while Tony continued his education at Trinity. He followed his older brother Peter into the study of dentistry, which he practised until only a few years ago. He was husband of Anne, father of Caroline, Geoffrey and Georgina, husband of Virginia, and partner of Janet who shared his love of jazz.

Tony was keen on snow skiing at Falls Creek, and also spent time there spin fishing for trout until he was introduced to fly-fishing by John Pilkington, whose law practice was located near Tony's dental practice at Chadstone, in the early 1970s. In 1975 Tony was a member of the Yarra Valley Fly Fishers' Club and a member of the short-lived Australian Fly Tyers Guild .

Tony became a member of the VFFA in 1976 and received an Honorary Life Membership in 1991. Along the way he served in almost every capacity the VFFA had to offer. In the VFFA he had found his alma mater. He loved its ethics, traditions and history. He admired and respected its members, both past and present, and his memory of the men of the VFFA was truly amazing, reflecting his involvement with so many of them over the years.



*Tony's last fly presentation to a guest speaker – to Greg French in August 2009*

He was keen to ensure that the traditions and values of the VFFA were maintained, despite a changing world. He would not wish to be described as the heart, soul and conscience of the VFFA, but for many years he came close.

The intrinsic values of fly-fishing suited Tony. He had a vast knowledge, almost encyclopaedic, of fly-fishing, fly tying, and associated matters. Having a fantastic memory for detail and interest in past events, his association with Jack Ritchie left him in receipt of much of the available history of the VFFA. Prompted by the publishing of *Geehi to Great*

*Lake*, and a growing awareness that unless he documented what he knew of the history of the VFFA it would be lost forever, he undertook this mighty task as a duty to the VFFA and the memory of its past members. The result, with the editorship of Rick Keam, is the publication of the history of the VFFA – *The Country For An Angler*. This will remain a great and lasting tribute to his lifetime’s involvement.

Tony was president of the VFFA in 1983 / 1984, and while he was a member for 35 years he was probably a councillor for thirty, or, for want of a better description, a ‘minister without portfolio’ and general factotum. Some but probably not all of his contributions included: secretary 1978-1979, occasional editor, and writer of numerous excellent articles for the newsletter. He followed Jack Morey as librarian for many years, and was a principal member of the sub-committee which designed and had built the display cases housing the historical artefacts of the VFFA. Tony catalogued and knew the origin and history of the collection. He was involved with the conception and striking of the Jack Richie medal, of which he was eventually a recipient.

Tony was for many years an organiser and instructor for the VFFA fly tying classes, and we remember those unforgettable presentations of flies to our guest speakers at every Annual Dinner for some 25 years. The annual VFFA auction of fly gear was another of Tony’s jobs where he meticulously catalogued the items for sale and supervised the auction from start to finish. And all the other VFFA events – the fishing days, Vibert/Whitlock stocking days, casting and president’s casting days, the bicentenary event commemorating the introduction of trout - Tony was always there and involved.



*Tony’s last trip to New Zealand –  
a fine trout from the Mataura*

Tony will be missed by his many friends with whom he fished all around the world. The stories of his exploits are legendary, usually hilarious and unforgettable. He usually caught his share of trout, despite his best efforts to the contrary. It should be noted that his name appears more often on the VFFA/Bairnsdale “Donger” trophy than anyone else’s.

The memory of Robert Anthony Brothers will remain with all his fishing mates and his place in history is suitably preserved with the publication of *The Country For An Angler*.

*Iven Affleck*

# The Silver Doctor

Dr R. A. Brothers

(This article, from the November 1995 VFFA newsletter, is one of many written by Tony and is included in *Geehi to Great Lake*. It was selected for inclusion here because it tells us something about the Silver Doctor fly and a lot about Tony the young angler.)



Although strictly speaking the Silver Doctor started life as a very successful salmon fly, a trout fly version came into being because of its great success with the lesser game fish. It was more favoured in the USA and Canada, however, than in England, the place of its birth. Mary Orvis Marbury's *Favorite Flies and Their Histories* (1898) cites lists of favourite flies by numerous contributors, many of whom include the Silver Doctor. It is obvious the fly enjoyed great popularity in the mid-to-late 19th century, extending to well into the first half of the 20th century. Three patterns are illustrated which are variations of the original salmon fly also illustrated.

I have not been able to find when this pattern was adapted to become a trout fly, but Charles Orvis - father of Mary Orvis Marbury - was responsible for one of the patterns mentioned above, all of which were tied as lake flies. I include it here as a classic fly because it was the first trout fly that I was to become familiar with, and it holds a special place in my memories.

The days seemed longer somehow, the sun brighter, the trees greener, the apples we used to steal from the orchard sweeter, and the sound of the creek burbling forever as it scurried to join the great Derwent. Everything seemed fresh - as fresh as the wild mint which proliferated along the banks of the Lachlan. It was the summer of 1943 and I was just 5 years old. George, my young playmate, and I spent much of those long summer days on the creek bank, making tunnels in the basket willows which, although cut out each year, grew back in ever greater profusion. We had quite a maze that summer. Because of the troubled times we lived in then, war games were a favourite pastime, though occasionally Roy Rogers or Hopalong Cassidy would make their appearance.

Unless we youngsters of the day had older siblings, toys apart from 'hand-me-downs' were hard to come by, so we had to make our own fun. By necessity we developed a great affinity

with our little patch of wilderness, as well as a good working knowledge of what went on there in nature. We really got to know the creatures which inhabited that creek. We knew where the platypus hole was and where the water rats scurried up the bank. We knew all about the eels and the dragonflies and 'horse flies', as the red ones were known then by us, a local name perhaps for the damselfly.

When we tired of games on the bank, we would idle the hours away lying on the foot bridge which spanned the creek from the high bank on the right to the lower bank on the left, where the path was picked up again before it encountered a second bridge which crossed an anbranch of the main stream. This was known as the Mill Race, dug by hand by convict labour in the 1820s to power a mill on the nearby hospital farm. The Mill Race, a half mile or so long, was 8 ft wide and 3 or 4 ft deep, and furnished with watercress and ranunculus, providing a home for intense insect life as well as some prodigious brown trout.

Hours and hours were spent staring into the water below the footbridge. This not only had a somniferous effect, but also gave us a great insight into the habits of the trout. We knew the lies and habits of all the residents of the pool upstream of the bridge - where the big ones were at the head, when they appeared each day, when they rested, when they became active and moved from side to side before returning to their favourite rock or ledge, when they came to the top and made rings - sometimes splashily, sometimes with barely a disturbance - and when they started patrolling away from their lies in the evening when the sun had left the water. We observed all this from on high.

It was a fine summer Sunday morning and I had escaped Sunday school. At about 11 o'clock George and I were at our usual position on the footbridge, peering through the cracks watching the upstream pool when we were astonished by the sudden departure of our finny friends below. This just did not happen normally unless one or other of us pitched in a stone or some gravel to see if they could be moved. They always returned after a few minutes when the pool was disturbed in this manner, but not so this day.

Some little time elapsed as we watched and waited until I happened to turn around, and there, downstream some 50 yards or so, I saw what to we 5-year-olds was the most incredible apparition. Two men dressed in what appeared to be very oversized gumboots, wearing wide-brim soldier's hats and waving long thin poles about in the air, were slowly making their way towards us, one on either side of the stream in the water. This was obviously what had disturbed our fish and we were not pleased.

"What are you doing?" I asked, when they finally got close enough to be heard above the rushing noise of the swiftly flowing creek. "Fishing!" was the reply. "Oh yes, and what are you using for bait?" "Flies."

"You can't use flies for bait," I responded with the benefit of great knowledge. One always used worms, or if you had any, wattle grubs - better than dynamite.

"Come here and I'll show you," one said. With that I scrambled down the bank, somewhat

apprehensively. He showed me a bunch of fluffy stuff fixed to a hook attached to his line. "That doesn't look much like a fly," I spouted. "Ah, but the trout think it is", he said authoritatively. Such a profound statement. Anyway I didn't believe him and I still have my doubts.

Believing I had had my leg pulled I rushed home to Sunday dinner, always a big occasion and the main meal of the week, often with important visitors, to report this. That day Mr Alan Walker was my folks' guest, and when I recounted my adventures he in fact confirmed that one indeed could fish with 'flies'. He even produced a Woodbine tin from his jacket pocket and picked out a shiny silver fish hook with lots of colourful feathers somehow fixed on, about the size of a shilling. "That's a fly," he said. "It's called a Silver Doctor." I was in awe.

Later in the evening, the family packed up for a picnic supper on the banks of the Derwent. I had a fishing pole made that afternoon of a willow stick, some green linen line, a hook, and some worms from the compost heap. Mr Walker, who I was later to learn was one of Tasmania's most famous fly fishermen of the time, was there with his rod - a superb bamboo, I was told - and his tobacco tin of flies.

I remember the whitebait were running, and the sea-run browns were pitching into them as they made their way upstream in a tight corridor, close to the bank on their spawning run. Sadly the whitebait population was decimated by unrestricted harvesting, and the Derwent lost what was once a spectacular fishery - but not before Mr Walker hooked and landed a great trout of probably 4 lb or so on his Silver Doctor.

The Silver Doctor has had its day and is seldom used now, having been supplanted by a myriad of streamers, Killers, and sundry other crass lures which pass as flies. At one time it enjoyed some popularity as a 'dry', being used to some good effect by some on the Mitta Mitta River and elsewhere. I'm afraid the idea of a Silver Doctor dry fly does not appeal to me, nor does a Watson's Fancy dry, nor Grouse and Purple dry, nor Jock Scott dry, all of which have been tried. To me that's bastardisation of the first order. There is a general principle in fly dressing, if unwritten, that although all dry flies can have a 'wet' counterpart it is not necessarily the case that all wet flies have a 'dry'.

Mick Martin used the Silver Doctor when fishing Lake Wendouree, although he "didn't much go for flies with a blue hackle." He fished in the Scottish 'loch style', drifting a team of three flies from a boat with the Silver Doctor as the top dropper, especially "in the chop and when the damsels are about."

It is now over 50 years since those balmy, if war-torn, summer days. I have carried a Silver Doctor all the time I have been fly-fishing, and I must say I have never yet landed a fish on it, but then I can only remember actually using it on one occasion. One day I'll set out with only a Silver Doctor and use just it alone to see if it can still take a trout. I'll bet it can, perhaps in some roily stream in New Zealand - the Tekapo maybe, or the Ahuriri.

## The History of the VFFA

Tony Brothers' *The Country For An Angler: a History of the Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association*, published by Michael Stevens, was released at the Association's Annual Dinner.

The book sets the scene by first revisiting the nineteenth century, adding some fascinating new material to earlier published accounts. The trials and tribulations of the first VFFA of 1906 are illuminated by recently rediscovered newspaper accounts, as are the growth in popularity of trout fishing in the 1920s, and the emergence of the second VFFA during the trough of the Great Depression. Developments in the fishery, developments within the VFFA, and recollections of and by its members, are then presented for each decade to the present day.

The many previously unpublished photographs, some from early glass-plate negatives with stunning image quality, together with paintings and sketches by the great pre-War Australian watercolourist and VFFA member Harold Herbert, ensure that this will be a work to be treasured.

A comprehensive high-quality index enables quick location of information on particular topics, events, people and places.

There are two editions – a **Standard Edition**, similar in appearance to the previous anthology, *Geehi to Great Lake*, and a **Limited Edition**, which is limited to 100 numbered copies. The limited edition will be similar to the standard edition, but on heavier 150 GSM Parilux Dull Cream paper. It is bound with a premium book-binding material called Rayas, and is burgundy in colour.

The Number 1 copy was auctioned at the Dinner, and was knocked down for \$2,500.

An order form is included with this newsletter. The Standard Edition sells for \$60 +\$10 post and packing and the Limited Edition sells for \$200 + \$10 post and packing. Please note that these prices are special introductory prices, and after October 31 the prices rise to \$70 and \$250 respectively.



*Does this show Peter Campbell fishing with a worm? (photo supplied by Trevor Stow)*

## Guest Speaker - John Philbrick

(This is a summary of John's speech at the Annual Dinner).

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of June this year I retired from 40 years practice of the law, 36 of those as a barrister. And I must say that I'm not missing it. I now have more time for fishing – in fact as much time for fishing as I want. I've just had a new business card printed – John Philbrick, Angler. And that is what I'm going to do for the rest of my life.

I spent a great deal of my life at the bar as a barrister where you have to behave in a most condescending way to annoying judges (some of whom you regard as being very much your intellectual inferiors) in the interests of the clients for whom you are appearing. I found this very hard because of my natural personality. I will give you an example. A couple of years ago I was walking up the street when I was accosted by a judge who had made some ill-considered comments whilst sentencing someone, and as a consequence had been castigated in the press. He said to me out of the blue, "Philbrick - do I have any faults?" I thought to myself, what on earth can I say to this fellow? I don't want to be seen to be toadying to him, so I said, "Yes, you do!" He turned very red in the face and said to me, "Well, what are my faults?" I replied, "Undue modesty, your honour." He said to me, "Philbrick, you are very perceptive and you'll go a long way." I'm pleased to say I have – I've got out of the bar and into fishing.

This particular judge did have a sense of humour. A few years earlier he had been adjudicating a case where a jury had to be struck, and a potential juror on the panel had indicated that he couldn't serve for a very compelling reason. The judge put him in the witness box and said to him, "Now Mr Bloggs, what's the reason why you can't serve as a juror in this trial?" "Well you see, your honour," he replied, "I have to attend my wife's conception." Quick as a flash the judge quipped, "Mr Bloggs, I think you mean your wife's confinement, but whether it's your wife's confinement or her conception, I think you need to be there."

You might well ask what all this has got to do with the VFFA. The answer, you might think, is next to nothing, except that when you read the VFFA history, lawyers, believe it or not, have featured not only in a major way in the early fishing history of Victoria, but also in the foundation and furtherance of the VFFA in its reincarnation back in 1932.

As Rick indicated in his talk, when attempts were being made to acclimatize trout in Victoria in the 1860s, some were sent out to 'Wooling' near Mount Macedon and were put in Riddell's Creek. By 1872 large trout were seen in Riddell's Creek, which was probably the location of a catch that was made in March of that year. There was a report in the Argus newspaper that a fine specimen of an English brown trout weighing 7½ pound had been caught. And it was caught by Judge Skinner – a lawyer. (What a wonderful name for a judge!) But anglers don't change, because it goes on to say that the "acclimatisation society declined to discuss the locality of the capture". So there it is, the first big trout ever taken in Victoria, and the angler was not prepared to divulge where it had been caught.



*John Philbrick speaking  
at the dinner*

And then we come to the first trout taken on a fly. And again I quote from the history: “The first capture of a Victorian trout specifically recorded as having been taken on the fly was by Ballarat solicitor Robert Holmes, on 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 1873. The fish, and again from an unnamed creek ‘some distance’ away, ‘was about 2 ft in length and weighed within a fraction of 6 lb’.”

So it must have been a very fat fish. But remember that when you read this history you must keep in mind the famous angling historian’s comment that “all fishermen are liars unless they are calling other fishermen liars”.

Anyway, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November the local paper published a plea from an angler who had examined the trout and went on to say, “I wish to see a short description of the state of the water, wind, and the sort of fly used. It may be that Mr Holmes would give this information to his brotherhood of the angle. I venture also to suggest to gentlemen having trout in their rivers the propriety of preventing the use of any natural bait by persons fishing in their waters. It is a kind of poaching, and a very cruel mode of fishing. Let fishermen use the fly, and nothing else for years to come, when seeking trout”. And very pithily Tony records that “Mr Holmes was not forthcoming with the desired information”. So there it is, 140 years ago, and what has changed?

Now unlike Ron Dennis, a member for 50 years, and Gerald Dryden for 62 years, I have only been a member of the VFFA for 40 years. So I guess I’ve been a member for over half the time the VFFA has been active since it was reformed in 1932. I must say that the gatherings I attended as a callow youth back in my early days were much more riotous affairs than we’ve had tonight. This was back in the days when I reckon 90% of the members were three-quarters full before they turned up at the Dinners, and a bottle of whisky was placed on each table. This was so they could continue with the beer, and then have a final topping up at the end. And the guest speakers back in that era, I have to say, were subjected to considerable interjection and some harassment.

Now Gerald would remember this, and I’m sure Ron does too. Mick Martin was a great character in the VFFA. He was an engineer and a very intelligent man, but like anyone who is worthwhile knowing, he had massive flaws. When the revered David Scholes, probably the most celebrated author and character in Australian fly fishing history, was guest speaker at the 1961 Dinner this is what is reported about Mick’s behaviour. Mick was a feisty personality, and this is quite an understatement. It landed him in trouble with the Council on several occasions. Most memorable was his unseemly conduct at the 1961 Annual Dinner and a later dispute at the Savage Club, which together led to his ejection and temporary expulsion. Bob Roles was present at the former occasion, and he recalls that each table had been equipped with a half bottle of Scotch, so that by the time guest speaker David Scholes got to his feet its effects were being felt. The most notable beneficiary was Mick, who became increasingly fractious. He demanded of David, “We’ve heard it all before; tell us something new!”

He was eventually seized by Jack Riley under one arm and Jack Pike under the other, and removed behind a partition from which muffled sounds of conflict continued. According to Bob Roles, when Mick became animated or agitated his luxurious wildly overgrown eyebrows would dance as if they had a mind of their own. Now I can say as a close friend of Bob that I have cross-examined him in some detail about this episode, and I must say that

the above is a most euphemistic account of Mick's behaviour on that night. Like all good trout, he did not go willingly to the net. He was a short man according to Roles, and when he was bodily picked up his legs were kicking vigorously as he was taken behind the partition, and loud sounds of scuffling and various other emissions were forthcoming. And Mick was no longer seen that evening. Now I don't want anyone to get any ideas tonight about emulating Mick, though I don't mind a bit of chiacking if I go on too long.

So not only did lawyers play a major role in trout fishing history but they also played a major role in the reformed VFFA following that meeting in August 1932. Les Vail, who was a solicitor, replaced the inaugural secretary Harry Lennox Ford. Those who have been President of this Association know that you get to keep the Harry Ford Trophy until you finish your term as President. Anyway, Ford resigned a short time after the Association was formed and Les Vail replaced him as the secretary, and in the history Rick and Tony have detailed his great efforts in setting up and ensuring the well-being of the Association. He was described as a dynamo within the VFFA. His partner in crime, Paul Nunan, was also a solicitor, and he became the second vice-president and then the second president. So the legal profession (much maligned and quite unjustly) has made at least a modest contribution in the world of fly-fishing in Victoria and in this Association.

I have been asked to speak tonight about the contribution to Australian fly-fishing history by VFFA members over the last 70 or 80 years. There has indeed been a major contribution. The list includes Reg Lyne, who was the editor of the *Australian Shooters and Anglers News* and was probably the greatest all-round angler in the history of Australian fishing. It also includes M. E. McCausland, whose ground-breaking *Fly Fishing in Australia and New Zealand* (published in 1949) was the 'bible' - the first book of its type published in Australia. Jack Pike, editor of the VFFA newsletter for 16 years, published a number of angling booklets under the nom de plume *Taggerty*. Ron McKenzie wrote the classic *Ratbag Mind of Dinas Vawr*.

John Pilkington, who is here tonight, wrote *Big River Days*. John and I share a common interest in mountaineering, and one of his great regrets in his life is that despite him having run 725 marathons, many of them overseas, I climbed Mt Cook and he didn't. I find that extraordinary, and I asked him why he didn't manage it. Now he's a lawyer, and you know what his explanation was? He had snow blindness! You might marvel at how I got up there and Pilks is still trying.

We also include John Brookes, who wrote that wonderful book, *Lifelong Pleasure – 70 Years of Fly Fishing*. And David Featherstone, who wrote *Australian Fly Fisher*. Don Gilmour was a member of the VFFA for over 50 years, and wrote numerous books and articles on Tasmanian fly-fishing and fly-fishing history. Philip Weigall is a present day member who has written, as you all know, many books and countless contributions to a number of magazines.

The VFFA itself has published books – Tony's history is the fourth book to be published. In 1971 Ted Dawkins published *How To Tie Trout Flies* – a modest little booklet, but the first of its type that ever appeared. And it was important. After his death there was a further book published on a trout fishing trip he had to Tasmania before the war, and it was a wonderful read. Then in 1988 *The Australian Trout*, by Jack Ritchie, was published, and in 2007 *Geelhi to Great Lake*, which has been a great success. And now we have *The Country For An Angler*.

I can tell you without hesitation, and in no way trying to exaggerate the worth of this book, that it is extremely well researched, it is well written, and it is well presented. It presents what could be a dry topic in an interesting way. Those of us who have read some of the histories that have been compiled by other fly-fishing organisations know what I mean. This book is in a class of its own and has been enriched by numerous vintage photographs which, in my opinion, make the purchase of the book worthwhile for these alone. It is a publication we can be rightly proud of. In my opinion it is, and will remain, a valuable contribution to Australian fly-fishing history and literature.

And finally I want to say a few words about Tony's enormous contribution towards the publication of this book. It was born back when we were working on the proofs of *Geehi To Great Lake*. I knew that Tony had an interest in the history of the VFFA and had done some work on it with Jim Piesse, but that work had been shelved. I asked Tony to write an introduction to *Geehi To Great Lake*, setting forth a potted history of the VFFA. Tony did this in enormous detail and we looked at it and decided that it was worthy of publication in its own right. And that was the genesis of *The Country For An Angler*. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Tony. Those of us who knew him over the years know that he had a great love of the VFFA. He loved its history, he loved its traditions, and he loved its characters – particularly the aforementioned Mick Martin, and of course the rather less flawed Jack Ritchie.

Tony devoted countless hours to producing this superb book, and it is a great tragedy that he can't be here tonight. However the book will remain a great tribute to his industry and to his love of the VFFA.

I searched around for some appropriate words to finish this speech, and in the *Fly Fishers' Journal of London* in 1928, G. E. M. Skues, another lawyer I might add, quoted some words of Rudyard Kipling. At this stage Skues was in the latter years of his life and was facing his own mortality. Kipling wrote:

“Go softly by that river-side or, when you would depart,□  
You'll find its every winding tied and knotted round your heart.”

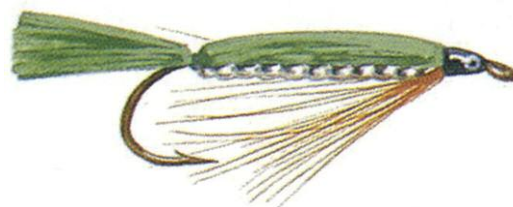
And to this Skues added these words:

“Go softly brother angler, and again - go softly when it is time to go.”

I thought they were very fitting words with which to finish this speech. We all know that for many many years Tony made a speech at the end of the guest speaker's speech, and sometimes, and I have to say this without any disrespect for Tony's family, his speech rivalled in length the guest speaker's speech. And then he presented a fly that he had tied and framed.

Of course there will be no fly presented tonight, but I thought rather than a minute's silence, Tony would appreciate it if we all rose to our feet and had a simple toast – “to Tony”.

Thank you.



# Report from Out West

( ... from Jim Blakeslee)

We were at Geelong and Port Arlington over the weekend, and came home to find the power had been out from Saturday 11pm until we got home Sunday evening. The Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu and Moyne rivers are all in flood again. The high and dirty water coming down the rivers is giving them a decent flush and is filling lakes Aringa and Gillear. Cartcarrong at Winslow is still below the end of the concrete boat ramp ... a mystery. If it fills from groundwater seepage, as I suspect (there are no creeks running into it), it may not begin to rise until the water from the recent rain filters down into the ground and raises the water table in that area. Centre pivot irrigators around Winslow have really been sucking out the ground water during the prolonged drought, so it may take a while to recover - if ever.



*The upper Merri River in flood*

Anyway, I've been to Gillear a couple times and walked around it looking for trout cruising the edges of the flooded paddocks, but not a sign. Same for the backwaters and flooded edges of the Merri below the Knackery Bridge at Levis. The lure fishermen are haunting the bridge itself - maybe they were trolls in a previous life. So, I haven't spent much time fishing there.

Maybe I'll check out Purrumbete and Bullen Merri on Wednesday to see what's going on there. The weather is supposed to be settled and sunny. In the interim I'll sit at the fly tying desk, refilling the fly boxes and hoping that the conditions will begin to improve so we can get some decent springtime fishing soon.

Cheers and best wishes, JB.

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## Bullen Merri Weekend – August 7 & 8

Fifteen members attended the 5th annual event where we enjoyed winter fishing on a lake in perfect condition in calm sunny weather. The lake on Friday and Saturday was perfectly calm, which made spotting the recently stocked rainbow trout easy. Eight fish were caught, making this trip the most productive ever. Shows what a recent stocking and good weather will do!

We all met at the Commercial Hotel Bistro for the Friday night snack, but had lost that tower of strength, Arthur Adams. Arthur had travelled on to say hello to his mate in Port Fairy, but caught some eye trouble and wisely stayed in Port Fairy until the Saturday morning.



*A piping hot meal*

Mick Crewes and Hugh Maltby brought their boats down on the Thursday - a day early, assuring them a double bed in the cabin. Colin Morrison and Rick Dugina came down on the Saturday, and knowing that the bunk beds would be taken, they stayed at the motel rather than the camping ground.

Both Jim Blakeslee and Bob Loch brought a boat each from Warrnambool, with Bill Hewitt as the deck hand. John Locke and I crewed for Jim, while Kossy joined Ray Boucher and David Wakefield in the Latrobe Valley craft.

Not to disappoint, Jon Kenfield produced his latest addition to his rubber duck fleet. This high speed craft could be an extra from the TV series *Sea Patrol*. A very comfortable craft it was too, with room for navigator big Bill Thomas.

As in previous years we were off the water at 5:30pm, back to the cabins, showered and frocked up to be piped in to our dinner host's 'Cottage' for pre-dinner drinks and a superb four-course dinner. It was inevitable that the new boys pigged out on the second course, which was haggis, and then they couldn't handle the roast. Our chef didn't disappoint with a fine country meal.

Thanks once again to Dr John Menzies for the use of the 'Cottage' and his fine rendition of *Amazing Grace*.

We are planning to go back again at the same time next year for a spot of 'closed season' fishing.

*Richard Goodall*



*The Jon Kenfield craft*



*The team gathers for dinner*

## ATF Report

The Australian Trout Foundation was well-represented at the recent 4WD and Fishing Show. Tom White, secretary of the ATF and president of Yarra Valley Fly Fishers, ran the fly casting area, assisted by a team of other ATF members. Tom, who is a very fine caster, has a lot of experience in teaching casting and was able to borrow rods and other equipment from Yarra Valley. The casting area was particularly popular, and there was a steady stream of interested participants from the opening of the venue in the morning until close of play, so Tom and his team were quite exhausted when the doors finally shut. But it was great to see the interest in fly casting, particularly among the younger anglers attending the Show. For many, it was their first encounter with a fly rod, but with Tom's expert tuition most 'got the hang of it' and were casting a reasonable line with respectable loops after 10 to 15 minutes of patient coaching and demonstration. And it was also great to see the obvious enthusiasm and excitement in the faces of particularly the many young teenagers who lined up for a lesson. Well done Tom.

Mick Hall was also in attendance for the three days of the Show, and was a constant source of information and advice to all and sundry on matters related to trout and fly fishing. He also tied dozens of flies to captivated audiences who sat near the fly tying booth, entranced as Mick's nimble fingers transformed bits of feather and fur and fluff into all sorts of bugs and critters. The Show certainly gave Mick the opportunity, if he needed it, to practice his tying skills.

The main reason, of course, for the presence of the ATF at the Show was to invite people to join the ATF, and many did. With now well over a 1,000 members the ATF is a strong voice in the protection and promotion of the State's trout fishery. The presence of the ATF



*Mick Hall assembling another fly*



*Tom White teaching the skills of fly casting*





*Mick Hall with the Inflatable Boat*

at the Show as sponsored by Jarvis Walker, who donated a Water Snake inflatable boat, equipped with electric motor, as a prize. All ATF members' names will be included in a draw on Saturday November 20, and one very lucky ATF member will then own an inflatable boat and motor worth about \$2,500. A nice incentive for folk at the Show to pay their \$10 subscription to the ATF.

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## UK Report...

(from Phil Bailey)

We are now entering the last month of the trout season and things have really picked up here in the North. We finally received a good month of rain, which lifted the rivers but didn't quite put them into a spate. The insect life has benefited from the 'fresh', and we are now seeing good hatches - small olives, needle flies, sedges and midges - throughout the day.

And the fish have responded accordingly. So, where we were fishing hard to get a limit a month ago, this month it will be easier. A client and I had a great day a week ago when he hooked and landed over 40 fish in 9 hours of fishing. 'Wrapt' isn't the word. He couldn't believe that he could catch so many fish. But he hadn't fished North Country flies before, and he most certainly hadn't fished the fast water and pocket water so abundant on our streams. So roll on September until the season closes.

But as you know, we have two seasons here in the UK – for trout and for grayling, and the grayling fishing continues right through winter. If you ever get the chance to be in the UK during October or November you could have the chance to fish for some spectacular grayling, whose minute sips belie the size of the fish.

I fished with Choco (David Grisold) a couple of days last month on both the Wharfe and the Driffield Beck. He had a great time (and is going to write an article for the October newsletter) and had a taste of fishing wet flies upstream. Hooked? Maybe. In the meantime I have been setting up a little on-line business selling North Country flies and specialist tackle into the States. Check it out at [www.northcountryflies.com](http://www.northcountryflies.com).

I was saddened by the loss of my fishing mate Tony Brothers, so the day after he passed away I went back to Driffield Beck and spent some time sitting quietly on the bank at the very spot that Tony caught his first grayling. A moving moment. But I didn't tarry too long, as I knew he would have had his gear on and still trying to out-fish me. So I fished on for the day in his memory, and had my best ever day on the Driffield. Fond memories I have of a great mate.

Cheers and tight lines for your trout season.

*Philip*

# **Eildon Report**

(Provided by Mick Hall)

## **The Lake**

According to Mick the very heavy rainfall of recent weeks has seen Lake Eildon rising rapidly, and at the time of writing the level is fast approaching 60%. (The prediction is that the level will peak in early November). As a consequence areas all around the edge are being flooded for the first time in many years, and the fish are moving into the shallows to feed on the bugs and critters caught by the rising water. For the first time in a long time the water is again under the Bonnie Doon bridge and flooding the banks behind the bridge. The word is that any area that has gently sloping banks is a prime spot to look for fish, so the edges at Bonnie Doon and around the Goulburn arm are tipped as prime spots to target. The only drawback is that the run-off from the surrounding land is taking a lot of mud with it, so the water around these edges is quite coloured at present. However as soon as the rains ease the water will clear and the action will be on.

## **The Pondage**

During the winter months the Pondage was dropped to a very low level so that maintenance work could be completed. As a result the fish were confined and concentrated into the old riverbed, and according to Mick there was something of a fish slaughter. Fortunately the work is now completed and in recent weeks the level has been raised to 30% to 50% capacity, which is ideal for fly-fishing. As DPI is continuing to stock the Pondage it has been fishing well, with some good midge hatches observed. Thus far 15,000 small trout (catchable and pan size) have been stocked, along with 1,000 larger fish. Apparently the top end of the Pondage has clear water while water at the lower end is coloured and muddy.

## **The Small Rivers**

The Acheron and Rubicon rivers have had massive surges in flow rates and have burst their banks and flooded into the surrounding paddocks. Such was the volume of water coming down the Rubicon that it demolished the bridge at Tumbling Waters, and the road into Thornton from Taggerty is now closed. As a result of the flooding and high water levels fish are now mooching around in the paddocks. However the 'tailing fish' phenomenon seen in Tasmanian lakes does not happen here, so spotting fish in the dirty water can be a little difficult. As soon as the heavy rains cease the levels will drop and the rivers will start returning to their normal levels. So the experience of fishing for trout in the paddocks is likely to be of fairly short duration.

## **The Goulburn**

While the news reports indicate that the Goulburn further downstream is flooding, the river from the Pondage outlet down to the mouth of the Rubicon is not all that high. However it is very dirty and may take some time to clear. The river is running at about 500 ML/day from the Pondage and a strongly flowing Snobs Creek is adding to this. DPI has stocked 6,000 trout in the Goulburn, with more promised, and the prediction is that the months of October and November will provide some fabulous fishing.

# FLY OF THE MONTH

## *Philip Weigall's Milly Midge*



Midges are an important item of food for trout, especially in lakes. In FlyLife magazine, issue 20 in year 2000, Philip Weigall wrote about midges and how to fish successfully for trout when our speckled friends are feeding on these tiny insects. He also gave details of a fly he had developed that had proved particularly successful- his 'Milly Midge'.

When the editor contacted Philip recently to inquire about Milly, he provided the following notes on fishing midges:

The timing for this month's pattern is good because midge thrive on rotting vegetation (read flooded vegetation) of which there is going to be more on Victorian lakes this coming season than for many years. Come spring and beyond, midge will be everywhere, and midge fishing will be a feature, particularly early and late in the day.

To my pleasant surprise, the Milly Midge I developed several years ago has proved to be more than a mere one season wonder and continues to work very well, especially where larger (size 14 plus) midge are concerned. (It is a difficult fly to tie in smaller sizes given the constraints posed by the relative bulk of the Maxima line and clear vinyl, though more innovative tiers than me could probably come up with finer materials to achieve the desired translucent, ribbed effect.)

The Milly is a midge pupa imitation. In my experience it's the pupa more than the adult which the trout are inclined to be obsessed by during a midge hatch: more often than

not, those supposed rises are actually incidental disturbances as the trout take the pupa just under the surface. Trout wagging their tails at you are a sure sign of committed pupa feeding. During heavy midge hatches (the norm) the trout will sometimes switch from surface adults to subsurface pupa and back again without rhyme or reason - annoying, but part of the game when fishing heavy hatches of virtually any trout water insect with an emergent phase.

### **Two tips:**

First, the original Milly is usually improved by a dash of red or orange across the top of the peacock thorax - this can be wool, plastic, anything you like. Tied in like a narrow wingcase, it suggests the shuck splitting and at times seems to make the fly more appealing.

Second, midge hatches are normally the proverbial blizzard and your fly a single snowflake. Don't hope for or expect the trout to deviate one inch for your Milly when it can eat plenty of real midge by swimming straight ahead. Success is absolutely down to repetitive, pinpoint presentations. No midge pattern on its own will catch trout in a heavy midge hatch; you must make an offer the fish can't refuse.

At very last light it's true that midging trout can be less discriminating (fewer real midge and harder for them to see) and then the fish will move further for the fly, or even take totally unrepresentative big wets (the old 'Woolly Bugger midge' joke). But don't kid yourself - if you're only catching midge feeders at the very end of the hatch, you haven't really capitalised on the hatch at all.

## **Tying the Milly Midge**

There are two photos here – the top one was taken from a website, and the final one is the editor's attempt – tail breathers too long and fluffy perhaps, and the wrong hook used as he couldn't get hold of the right model. (Don't be too critical – he did his best).

### **Materials:**

**Hook** Kamasan B160 sizes 10, 12

**Thread** Black 6/0 Uni-thread

**Tail and Head Gill Tufts** White Hi Vis

**Body** Olive Uni-floss 1X,

**Back** Tiewell vinyl rib - clear and narrow

**Rib** Brown maxima line, 2 kg

**Thorax** Peacock herl (with a splash of red or orange material added on top)

## Method:

1. Place the hook in the vice, tie on the thread and run the thread down and round the bend.
2. Tie in a small wad of white Hi-Vis along the hook shank so that it sticks out at the bend and at the eye. It can be trimmed to the right length when the fly is finished. Take the thread back to the bend.
3. Tie in a short length of the clear vinyl, a short length of the 2 kg line, and a short length of the olive Uni-floss. Wind the thread back up the shank to a point  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the shank length back from the eye.
4. Wind on the olive body material and tie it off.
5. Take the vinyl over the top of the shank and tie it off too.
6. Wind on the rib so that it holds the vinyl in place and tie off the rib.
7. Tie in a short length of red material at the eye and wind the thread back to a point about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the shank length from the eye. Tie in a bushy peacock herl and wind it on, tying it off at the eye.
8. Take the red material and lay it over the top of the peacock herl, then tie it off too.
9. Take the thread under the tuft of Hi-Vis at the eye and use a few wraps to stand the Hi Vis up a little. Then tie off the thread.
10. Trim the Hi Vis tufts fore and aft to the right length.
11. Go catch a big trout.





# 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 Marty Rogers 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.

## OVERDUE BOOKS

Our librarian reports that a number of members have failed to return library books on time. Could all those book loving members who have failed to return books promptly do so.

## V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

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
Cloth badges .....	\$7.00 each
Diaries .....	\$2.00 each
<b><i>The Australian Trout by Jack Ritchie.....</i></b>	<b>\$20.00</b>
<b><i>(Special offer – buy one, get one free!)</i></b>	
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 9455 9017.

### VALUED DONORS

#### The following made donations for the raffle at the 2010 Annual Dinner:

- Armadale Angler • Aussie Angler • Australian Fishing Network • Bernard Holbery • Compleat Angler Box Hill • Compleat Fly Fisher Melbourne
- Daniel Hackett, RiverFly, Tasmania • Fly Life Publications • J M Gillies
- Lowes Furniture • Mayfly Tackle • Mick Hall • Michael Steven's Publishing • Millbrook Lakes Lodge • Nick Taransky - Bamboo Rod Maker • Peter Hayes, Cressy • Pro Angler Fishing Tackle • Ray Brown, Onkaparinga Flies & Cane Rods