

FLY LINES



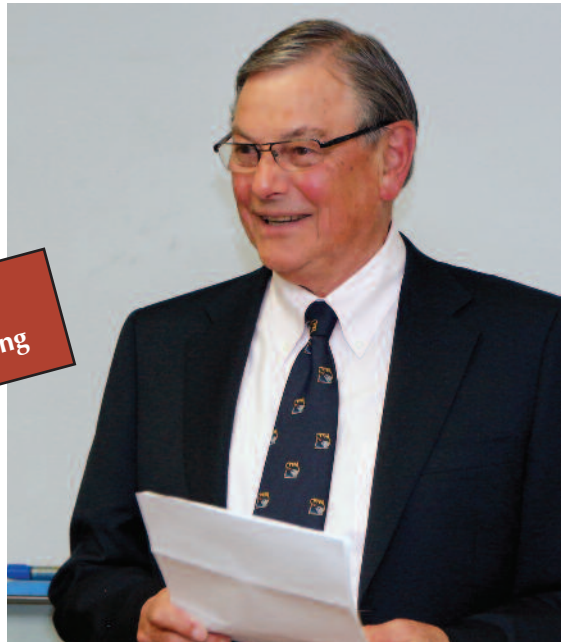
SEPTEMBER 2015

The September general meeting is our Annual General Meeting – an important event. President Hamish Hughes reminds us that all financial members are eligible for nomination and election to the Council. Notice papers relevant to the AGM are included with this newsletter, including the Notice of Annual General Meeting, Nomination Form, Appointment of Proxy Form, and the Notice of Special Business – indicating that at this year's AGM there will be a vote to amend the rules of the Association in order to allow female members.

Thursday, September 17, 8:00pm,
at the
Celtic Club

PLEASE make a Dinner booking
by 12 noon on Thursday,
September 17, by phoning
0498 254 497 and leaving a message.

VFFA
Annual General Meeting



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 63 NO.11 – SEPTEMBER 2015

Organisation No. A0024750J

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The September AGM

The September general meeting is again our Annual General Meeting. Notice papers relevant to the AGM are included with this newsletter.

Two things to note – firstly, some Councillors are retiring at this meeting so there will be vacancies to fill. So if you have some experience in management and a desire to see our Association remain vibrant and responsive to the needs of members, please give some thought to nominating for Council. Meetings are lively and entertaining, and you will enjoy your participation, as well as contributing your skills and expertise for the benefit of our Association.

Council meets regularly and all management issues involved in running the Association are dealt with there, so that our monthly general meetings are

given over totally to the advertised activities – guest speakers, auctions, fly tying demonstrations ...

Secondly – and most importantly - at this AGM a very significant change to our constitution will be proposed and voted on. As the Notice of Special Business indicates – there will be a motion put that our constitution be changed to allow female members to join the VFFA. If you wish to be part of this decision-making then either attend the AGM or ensure that you complete and post in the Proxy Form included with this issue as an insert.

The date – Thursday, September 17, at the Celtic Club.

President's Message



In July I had a wonderful time in California enjoying the record breaking hot weather with my son Christian and friends. We sailed his powerboat from San Francisco to San Diego and back

along the coast with its many welcoming marinas and ports of call. Thank you Dermot for holding the fort in my absence. Since I returned I have been able to catch up and freeze with the hardy souls at Sunday casting; chair a productive August Council meeting; visit the Snob's Creek DPI Hatchery with 18 VFFA colleagues; welcome 72 members and guests at the Annual Dinner and freeze again at the President's Casting Day.

As you will read elsewhere in this edition, the highlights were the Snob's Creek visit hosted by Fish Production Program Leader, Neil Hyatt, and the Annual Dinner where writer and guide, Philip Weigall was our popular guest speaker. In the VFFA we are privileged to have such expert professionals as Neil and Philip among our members. At the dinner we were joined by many more professionals all who had donated so generously to the 12 raffle prizes. Proceeds were well over \$2,000. We are fortunate to have so many first class fly fishing tackle shops and guides looking after our needs so close to home. They all deserve our thanks and full support in return for their generosity. Another highlight from the dinner was that six guests have now applied to become members. I am sure they will all be very welcome.

It is true that when you're busy time flies. I find it hard to believe that it is nearly

twelve months since I had the honour of becoming your President. It has been a successful time for the VFFA judged by the support of members at general meetings, trips and other activities. I have been supported by a dedicated and active Council and thank each one of them for their input. I look forward to the AGM on Thursday September 17, at which you will elect the Office Bearers and Councillors for 2015-2016. I also look forward to thanking retiring Councillors and welcoming the newly elected ones. New minds and new ideas will be most welcome.

You will also have the opportunity to vote on my motion to allow female fly fishers to join the Association. In the March edition of *Fly Lines* I raised the issue and asked for members' feedback. Since then I have received nothing but support in writing and talking with many members. And Council has given me their unanimous support. Surely after 82 years it is time to catch up with the rest of society and sporting clubs and to let our female family and fly fishing friends join us?

Spring has sprung. The new season is with us. We have been invited to Dam Day by the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers' on Sunday October 11 and we have the very popular Annual Warrnambool weekend November 13 to 15.

And our first *lunchtime* General Meeting at the Celtic Club is on Thursday October 15 where Jim Allen is our guest speaker. To enable busy members to get back to their offices on time we will finish by 2:00 PM. I suggest you put your lunch orders in soon after noon so that serving can start about 12:30 or so. We will be in the Shamrock Restaurant on the first floor.

Tight lines,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hamish". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hamish Hughes, President



Christian Hughes and dog Misty at Newport Beach

The October Meeting

We are breaking new ground. Many of our members are now retired, and some find getting to evening meetings in the city an increasing challenge. So, following the lead of the Sydney Fly Rodders, we are going to trial a once off lunchtime meeting at the Celtic Club. While this is an attempt to cater for our retirees, all members are of course welcome.

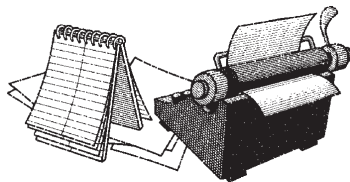
The meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 15, and will start at 12 noon and finish at 2:00 pm.

Our guest speaker for this event is one of our favourite Elder Statesmen who has proven to be a wonderfully entertaining and popular speaker – Jim Allen (Past President and Life Member). Be assured – Jim will be in top form, and is always worth hearing.

If this new lunchtime venture is well supported then no doubt the Council will consider some further lunchtime meetings.



From the EDITOR'S DESK



"It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong." (Voltaire)

"Heresy is the perpetual New World, the unknown sea, toward which the brave all sail. It is the eternal horizon of progress." (Robert G. Ingersoll)

It's been a cold and unfriendly winter, so I haven't fished much in recent months. The void has been filled with the obvious – tying a few flies, watching some YouTube videos on sundry fly fishing topics, reading a pile of magazines, and buying a couple of books. Yes – two books. The first was *The Waterbug Book*, by John Gooderham and Edward Tsyrlin. This popular tome is all about the bugs (macroinvertebrate) that live in our waterways. I figured that if I was going to fish a fly representing caddis pupa in the Yarra it might be smart to know what colour the real ones were, what shape they were, and what size they were. But after I bought the book it struck me that perhaps I could have just headed out to the Yarra near Warburton with a small net to scrape a few of these critters out of the water and see for myself. But the book is worth having anyway. If nothing else its presence on my book shelf helps foster the highly dubious impression that as a fly fisher I know what I'm doing.

My second purchase was even more fun – *Fly Fishing Outside the Box – Emerging Heresies*, by Peter Hayes. This Peter Hayes is not our VFFA member, master caster, and top guide living at Brumbys in Tasmania. The author of my second new book is a retired market research expert

living in the UK. He is also a fanatical fly fisher with involvement in a pile of organisations involved in trout fishing, salmonid research, environmental stuff and river rejuvenation. In reviewing Mr Hayes' book prominent UK angler and trout guru Charles Jardine says: "This book is a breath of fresh air that will ruffle the odd tranquil surface and reveal a new world on all river fly fishing levels ... The book challenges you, convention, myths, and widely held dogmatic opinion ..."

Let's try a few snippets. We all fish nymphs in rivers. We tie them with the head of the nymph at the eye of the hook and the tail of the nymph at the bend. Then we cast them upstream and they float back down with their heads connected to the tippet of our leaders and thus pointing downstream. But according to Mr Hayes observations of actual live nymphs drifting in streams reveal that they mostly face upstream. Our artificials are thus facing the wrong way. Does it matter? (Not sure if the trout notice or mind. It's an interesting thought though.)

Another one. According to Peter Hayes the wings and raised abdomen and tails of a hatched dun are designed to turn it into the wind so that when it flies off it gets lift-off and doesn't tumble over. So in a downstream wind all the duns will face upstream and in an upstream wind the duns will all face downstream. But again our dun patterns are tied so that the head of the artificial dun is near the eye of the hook.

So if we are fishing with a breeze blowing upstream our duns will be facing the

correct way but if the wind is blowing downstream they will not be facing upstream like all the naturals beside them are doing. Do the trout mind? Apparently a few anglers reminded Mr Hayes that they were catching trout on duns that were indeed facing the wrong way. He responded by suggesting that possibly trout saw these wrong-facing duns as ‘cripples’ and thus as easy meals. So perhaps it doesn’t matter too much.

Finally, I’ve read in a number of places recently that it is best to use fluorocarbon tippet when fishing with dry flies. The fluorocarbon line will sink below the surface a bit and might thus make a less visible and off-putting connection to the fly for any interested trout. In the old days, prior to fluorocarbon, the advice given was to grease the fly but de-grease the tippet. Mr Hayes says this is “a terrible mistake and a ghastly piece of misinformation that has been foisted upon us anglers for decades. ... The inescapable fact is that the tippet is considerably less visible and massively less obstructive to the fish if it is floating.”

Then follows some photos of flies tied to floating tippets which are taken below the surface. They show that a floating tippet is

actually not all that obvious to a trout under the surface. Some discussion then follows, based on the physics (optics), that asserts that if the tippet sinks below the surface then as the fly drifts closer to the trout it appears to the trout that there are indeed two thick hawsers connected to the fly – one being the actual tippet under the surface and the other being the reflection of the tippet above the surface, as the surface acts as a mirror. And don’t be deluded into thinking that trout can’t see well, says Hayes, their close vision is incredibly good.

So there you go. We thought we had it all sorted out, but as I’ve said before, you never stop learning in this game. Mr Hayes has got me thinking about what we do, and Philip Weigall’s talk at the dinner gave us plenty of practical food for thought too. And the new season on the rivers is now open - from now until Christmas it will just get better and better.

Keep in mind – your next cast might just connect with the best fish of the season.

Best wishes

Lyndon Webb



Simon Joel

Meet Another New Member

The Annual Dinner – with Philip Weigall

The 2015 Annual Dinner was another highly successful event. Some 72 members and guests attended and thoroughly enjoyed the occasion. The meal was fine, the ambience was warm and convivial, and the guest speaker was excellent. As in previous years there were a number of superb raffle prizes donated by our very generous supporters, and in one hilarious moment Philip Weigall, invited to draw the tickets of prize winners, managed to draw his own ticket. He hastened to assure us he'd never won a prize in a raffle before.

The text of Philip's presentation is given in this newsletter. Those present also appreciated his readiness to spend much of his evening moving around among the tables, answering questions and discussing trout and other matters with those who were present.

Secretary David Grisold was in top form too – signing up six new members from among the guests.

There were a number of apologies, including one from our longest serving member, Gerard Dridan, who joined the



Guest speaker Philip Weigall

VFFA in 1948. Gerard has not missed an Annual Dinner for many years, but is currently holidaying in Queensland and at his age thought the drive back to the Celtic Club for the evening just a tad too far. But he assures us he'll be there at the Christmas Dinner.

Our prize donors must be acknowledged. All members would thank these very generous businesses and people:

Aussie Angler Pty Ltd, Andrew Braithwaite Fishing Gear, Armadale Angling, Australian Fishing Network, Bernard Holbery, FlyLife Publishing, FlyFinz Fishing Tackle and Books, Gavin Hurley's Fly Fishing Pro-Angler, Hayes On Brumbys, J.M. Gillies Pty Ltd, Mayfly Tackle, Mick Hall, Millbrook Lakes Lodge, Mountain Stream Company, Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies, Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd, The Compleat Angler Box Hill, The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne, and Vision and Pisces Fly-Fishing Tackle.



Hamish and David sorting out the program



It was a very enjoyable occasion



Hey, I think I've won a prize!

Invitation to the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers' VFFA Dam Day

Our fly fishing colleagues in the Latrobe Valley have stocked a number of dams on private farms around the Thorpdale district. They do so each year and fish up to 9 lb have been caught.

All VFFA members are invited to Dam Day on Sunday October 11. We meet our hosts in the park opposite the bakery at 9 am. After a cuppa we will be split up and taken to different dams to try our luck. After a morning's fishing we return to the park to skite or otherwise with fellow anglers over a BBQ lunch. A multiple coin donation to cover lunch and a raffle towards fish stocking are conducted before we set off for an afternoon fish. The LVFF are exceptionally friendly and hospitable and experienced local guides.

For some years VFFA members have been able to join the LVFF as Affiliate Members for \$35 per year. The funds are used to buy fish for stocking the dams. If you wish you can join or renew your membership on the day.

The details: Date: Sunday October 11.

Meeting venue: Thorpdale public gardens opposite the Bakery

Time: 9:00 am for 9:30 am departure for the dams

Equipment: 6 weight rod, full waders not required. Sunglasses, brimmed hat and suncream and wet weather jacket just in case.

Catering: Supplied by LVFF hosts

Cost: Donation to LVFF

Booking: Phone 0498 254 497 and leave Dam Day message, or email president@vffa.org.au with same.

RSVP: by Friday October 9 at the latest

The President did rather well at last year's Dam Day



President's Casting Day

The annual dinner was clearly a success with a big turn out to hear Phil Weigall. His talk was appropriate in that he concentrated mostly on fishing in Victoria. He explored a variety of locations that members should be aware of.

The tradition continued with the President's Casting Day the next day at the Red Tag pool in Fairfield. About 25 members and guests turned up. However the weather was unkind with showers and a stiff wind ripping across that plateau.

Members agreed to re-visit the casting aspect of the day when we have better conditions, so the afternoon became largely social. Joe Haslauer, the yearlong casting convener had hot coffee, nibbles and hotdogs on hand. Major thanks must go to Joe, not only for The President's Casting Day, but also for the entire winter casting season. Joe does a magnificent job and is always in good cheer.

Mike Crewes turned up with a selection of delicious apple pies made by his lovely wife Shirley. Thanks to both Shirley and Mike.

President Hamish Hughes provided "suitable" beverages to close winter casting and launch the trout season. Thanks Hamish.

There were plenty of rods on hand and for some it was the last opportunity to tinker with gear before the start of the 2015-16 season.

Of course, as the afternoon wore on the conversation turned to trout and members and guests alike all hoping for a cracker season... not only in Victoria but also in Tasmania and the Snowy Mountains.

Tight Lines,

Dermot O'Brien



Three of Shirley's fabulous apple pies

Philip Weigall's Presentation

Philip is a VFFA member. He is also well known to us all as a writer, editor, and fly fishing guide. He now edits FlyStream magazine, a superb online fly fishing publication which can be found at <http://flystream.com/magazine>. Issue 8 has just been released, and is packed with fabulous articles and information.

A summary of Philip's presentation:

Thank you Hamish for the very kind introduction. It's a real pleasure for me to be here.

Recently I was at a kids' soccer match and I ran into an old friend Vinny. Now Vinny leads a busy life so doesn't get to go fishing as much as he would like. But he loves his fly fishing, and whenever we meet he is almost desperate for a first-hand account of my latest adventures. So as soon it was half time he raced off to the coffee van and grabbed us each a cuppa. He passed me a cappuccino and said, "Tell me all about your latest trip to New Zealand." I said, "Look Vinny, I haven't been to New Zealand this season." He looked a bit disappointed, but then brightened up with: "Ah, you've been to Montana again haven't you!" "No Vinny, I haven't been to Montana."

He was now quite crestfallen and I thought he might repossess my coffee, so I thought quickly and said, "Vinny, I haven't even had my passport out in the past 12 months. But I have been fishing in south-eastern Australia – Tassie, the Snowys, Victoria - and I've had a fantastic time. It's been one of my most enjoyable seasons, and it's been superb."

I started telling him about the bream I had caught in the south-west, and some great days on Lake Eucumbene, and on the rivers in the north-east ... and I kept my cup of coffee. Then I thought, maybe you gents would like to hear about it too. But when I got down to it there was a difficulty - my fishing diary for the past 12 months had over 100 entries.

So what I decided to do was to pick a session from each of the last 12 months. Sometimes it's a day and sometimes it's just a few hours. I haven't cherry picked the best days, but I will admit that I have cherry picked for variety. So here is my season in the south-east.

August last year:

About this time last year my good friend Max and I went to Lake Wartook. Normally when we go to Wartook we take a boat, but on this occasion we were on foot, and it was a great trip. The lake was very high and the water was very clear. There were a few fish moving – enough to keep your interest up. I've written about this in the latest issue of *FlyStream*, where I talk about sight fishing mainland style. What I'm on about here is not the sort of



A fine brown from Lake Wartook

sight fishing that Peter Hayes has in Tasmania, where he wade polaroids lakes, sees a fish and then tracks it.

Sight fishing mainland style, however, is where you see a swirl, you are ready, and you get your fly there straight away, because you mightn't see another swirl for an hour. You mightn't polaroid another shape for an hour. We have brief windows that open and close, and that's the sort of fishing Max and I had on this day. We certainly didn't catch huge numbers of fish, but we got some, they were a good size, and it was a very satisfactory day.

From my diary the weather was hazy with high cloud, the water temperature was 11.5°C, and we spotted the odd swirl, probably to midge, and an odd smelter. The most effective techniques were careful searching with a slow, steady figure-eight retrieve and covering any movement. We caught two browns of 3 and 5 lb, and two 2 lb rainbows. Max also missed a few more good fish.

September:

When the stream season opens in Victoria it's mostly too early for good fishing. There are some years when I can put my hand up and say the season has opened and I've got through September without going out. But on this occasion Raymond and I looked at the forecast and saw that we were to have beautiful blue skies. There hadn't been a lot of rain, so we jumped in the car and drove to the Delatite for a couple of days.

You look at the photo here of a beautiful section of the Delatite and you think, "How could you not have wonderful fishing?" You go there in December on that little stretch of stream below Timbertop Creek and you'd think it couldn't get any better. But in September? It looks great but I don't know where the little buggers go. It's harder. You don't see rises, you don't see insects, and Raymond

and I worked pretty hard for a few hours to get four fish. But it was great.

What did my diary record? The weather was sunny, with no wind. The air temperature was 20°C, and the water was 10°C and clear. The best fly was a small tungsten beadhead Green Drake nymph fished under an indicator. The fish caught were four ½ - 1 lb browns and rainbows. It was a really nice way to spend a day and I'm glad we went, even though we were probably two months too early.

October:

Not so Hepburn Lagoon in early October. Now I'm lucky in that I live 10 – 20 minutes drive to a few lakes in central Victoria. And if I've got a bit of a sore neck because I've been working at the computer for too long then it's good to get out and have a fish for a few hours. I have to be back in time to pick up the kids from school though. But if it's October and there is a gentle westerly and some high cloud I get a sore neck very easily.

So it was on this particular day. I couldn't really afford the time but I went anyway. I arrived at Hepburn and it was beautiful – really clear, as clear as I have ever seen it. And it was full, and as I was rigging up I could hear the splashes - fish were up, and were rising. I had hoped they would be on mayfly, but as I got closer I saw a lot of fish coming right out of the water.

I realized then that many of them were actually on damsel flies. Now as a rule damsel fly feeders are a lot tougher than mayfly feeders, but nevertheless it was a fantastic thing to see. So I raced down and had a shambolic 15 minutes trying to cast to these jack-in-a-box damsel fly feeders. They were all good fish too – three, four or five pounders. Then I took a deep breath and thought I've got to find something feeding on mayflies. There were a few mayflies around and I found two fish working the mayfly really >>>

well among all the splashy leaping fish. One of them refused me, but the other one took my Possum Emerger, a favourite mayfly pattern, and I landed him.

The tough part was that I had to be at school at 3:15 to pick my boys up, so I walked away. And there is no more dispiriting feeling in fly fishing than walking away when you can hear fish rising behind you, especially when it's Hepburn Lagoon.

From the diary: Hepburn Lagoon (south-west shore). High cloud and wind light and from the WNW. Air temperature was 17°C and water temperature was 15o C.

November:

One of the highlights of my year are my fishing trips to the Snowy Mountains with my good mate Steve Dunn. It's amazing how much that place changes, but the beauty of the Snowys are the options. I

haven't ever had a trip to the Snowys where somewhere wasn't fishing well. It might be Three Mile Dam at 1500 metres, or it could be the Murrumbidgee River because the rain isn't flooding it.

On this occasion we were at Providence arm on Lake Eucumbene, and there is a lesson here for us. You could have fired a shotgun with your eyes closed and you wouldn't have hit anyone, because there was nobody there - because 'the fishing was no good'. Steve and I had heard these rumours but we thought that this couldn't be right. The lake was perfect at 55% and stable and clear. And Lake Eucumbene is always full of fish.

We were staying at Providence Lodge and were the only people there. We were sitting in the dining room overlooking the lake and were halfway through the cheesecake when Steve said, "I think that was a rise." I looked out and thought



Magnificent Lake Eucumbene brown

maybe it was a bird. But no, there was another rise. We then realised there was a rise going on just 200 metres from the window where we were sitting eating our dinner. So I ditched my cheesecake (no small thing), grabbed my rod and ran to the lake. Termite and ant hatches were both happening at the same time, and fish were rising as far as you could see. The Claret Carrot fly was what you needed, and I had plenty of them.

What followed was two hours of some of the best fishing I had had all year. The only tough bit was there was a lot of long flooded grass and anything over about four pounds got under the grass and would jump on the other side. Now I fish with 8 lb tippet, so rarely get broken, but I did straighten a few hooks. But it was a wonderful evening on a lake 'that had no fish', so just keep that in mind.

The diary: Time – 6:40 – 8:40 pm. Weather: Cloudy with a light NW wind. Air temperature was 22°C and water at 17°C. Fish caught: five from 2 – 4 lb, four browns and one rainbow, all on the Claret Carrot.

December:

Every December I make time for a trip to our north-east Victorian rivers. It's one of my favourite times up there. It's probably the most likely time in the year when you have the perfect combination of water levels and temperatures. So Max and I headed off. We started in the Ovens Valley, then drove over the mountains to the Mitta Valley, then drove home down the Snowy Creek.

The Ovens River was fantastic. It has recovered beautifully and we caught a lot of wild rainbows and some wild browns. I then had the best day I have ever had on the Victoria River. But for tonight I chose the Cobungra. It's a beautiful river but in all my fishing life has always been a little below expectations. It's very beautiful and

is probably the clearest river in Victoria, but in my experience it never quite delivers on the promise. I've had good days there, but not great days.

Anyway Max and I drove down to the river. It was cloudy, overcast, calm and mild, and we could see fish rising as we approached the river. That in itself had already made the day for me. We had a fabulous few hours casting dry flies to rising fish. Very demanding fishing though. Most of the fish were rising in the quiet pools and if you had to get in to wade then as you were moving up you could see fish rising ahead of you, but they kept moving up away from you. But if you snuck along the bank and flicked a fly in without the fish seeing you, you would catch one. It was magic fishing and very memorable.

The diary: Weather - calm, cloudy, air temperature of 18°C and water at 16.5°C. The water had moderate flow and was crystal clear. Best Flies: Para Adams, Cadillac nymph, Antron Caddis and Wulff. Fish caught: nine browns from 1.0 to 1.5 lb.

January:

I got down to Tasmania three times during this past season. It really is a marvellous place and the extent of the fishing in Tassie beggars belief. Most of us, and I've been guilty of this for decades, fish just a small fraction of it. We fish the Pine, Penstock, the Great Lake maybe, the Midlands, the Macquarie, the St Pats, and we feel we needn't go any further afield because the fishing is so good in these places. But as Christopher Bassano has shown me many times, if you do go further afield you are rewarded.

On this particular occasion Andrew and I ended up on the southern rivers. We flew into Hobart, so of course we fished the famous Tyenna River. Not so famous is the Florentine River, which runs for >>>

tens and tens of kilometres. There might be bits of the Florentine that would only get fished once a decade, if ever. And it's a beautiful river. It's the size and the equivalent of the Mitta, and the fish are about the same. There are three pounders there, and a lot of fish from 1 – 1½ lb.

On this day, in beautiful weather, two things worked. The fish were right along the edges in shallow water under the tea tree, and they were in the deep slots, with very few in between. It was another magic afternoon in Tasmania. So do yourselves a favour. Next time you go there give yourself a day, either with or without a guide, on somewhere other than the central highlands and the Midlands. You will be amazed at what you'll find. Not the whole trip; just a day.

The diary: time – 3:00 – 6:00 pm. Sunny with no wind. Air temperature of 27°C and water at 17.5°C. Very occasional rises. Best flies: Derwent PTN and Royal Wulff. Most effective techniques - carefully fishing deeper pools and shallow edges. Fish caught – 12, both browns and rainbows, from 1 – 3 lb.

February:

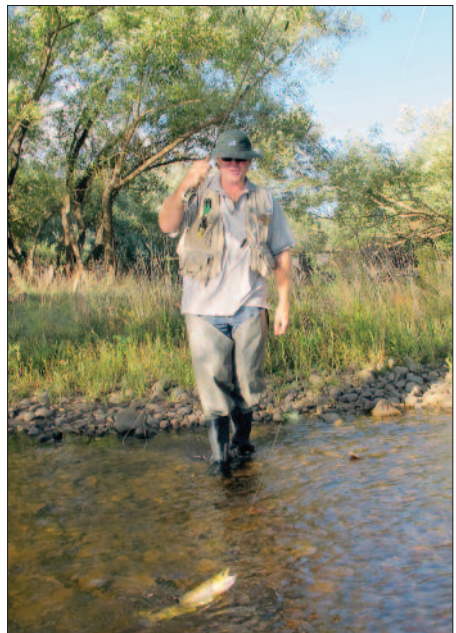
It's certainly great having Tasmania just over Bass Strait, but it's also pretty good having the Rubicon, Steavenson, Acheron and Goulburn rivers just a comfortable day trip up the road. We are very blessed. The picture on the screen here is of a lovely afternoon on the Rubicon with my friend John Douglas (JD), who is here tonight. He's a Fisheries person who actually fly fishes, and despite what he tells you, he fly fishes rather well. One thing about fisheries scientists is that they have a very objective understanding of how trout work. For all his modesty JD has an insight into that and he is great fun to fish with.

The amazing thing about the Rubicon is that this was in early February after the

holiday pounding. How does this modest-sized stream produce such great fishing? Part of the reason has to do with which bits of the river are more likely to be heavily fished and which aren't, and it's often a function of ease of access and ease of casting, and the extent to which you are prepared to get wet.

In the latest issue of *FlyStream* Nick Taransky has a piece on fishing pressured water. He makes the point that when you are fishing pressured water you need to think about the water that most other people won't have fished - the bits where you have to clamber down through the blackberries or risk losing your fly on a log, because these are the places most people have walked past and haven't bothered fishing.

That's how we approached the Rubicon this day. I fought my way down through the blackberries and the willow branches and went splish, straight in up to my



JD encountered some good ones in the Rubicon

waist. I was standing behind a log that went right across the river and there was another log not much further up. I flicked the grasshopper pattern in, and as it drifted down this huge trout appeared out of nowhere and followed the fly. It was a race to see whether the trout would get to it before the grasshopper hit the log. The fly hit the log with this huge trout, which would have been my best ever Rubicon trout, hot on its tail. And I'm thinking, "What do I do now?" Then I looked down into waist deep water behind this log and this trout about two feet long swam around me and went straight through my legs and back up the river, saying, "No, not today thanks."

The diary: time – 4:00 – 8:00pm, weather - sunny, light wind. Air temperature – 25°C and water at 18°C. Water – a good flow and moderately clear. There were odd willow grub rises, then more regular rises towards evening. Best Flies were the Wee Creek Hopper (orange legs) and Commonwealth Hopper. Fish caught – seven browns of 1 – 1½ lb. Missed a couple of beauties.

March:

On March 17 JD and I fished the Steavenson/Taggerty Rivers. Different rivers to the Rubicon but still really pretty. By the time we got to the Steavenson the light was low and there was a little bit of gentle rain. It seemed like nymph water, but after two or three fish had passed the nymph to reach the dry fly, off came the nymph and it was dry fly for the rest of the day. Again the Steavenson and Taggerty are pressured rivers and heavily fished. They would have seen a lot of flies by March 17. There were plenty of fish in the open and easy to fish spots but your fly had to drift perfectly. The more pressured fish get, the more critical they are of drift. Even little half pound fish will pick the fault.

So we worked super hard on drift – getting into the right position, throwing little mends. Sometimes it took two or three casts, which isn't ideal, to get the fly to drift perfectly. But if it did and it was a nice bit of water you could just about guarantee that something would come up and take it. So the lesson here was that perfect drift is important, especially on pressured rivers.

Diary: time – 4:00 – 6:30 pm, cloudy with a light wind, 20°C. The water was clear, with ideal height, and 14°C. There was an odd rise. Best technique was careful searching and perfect drift with a Stimulator. Fish caught – 12 from ½ - 1 lb, both browns and rainbows.

April:

Back up to the Snowys. This was one of those trips when the closer it got the worse the weather forecast got. They were forecasting snow, and sadly this forecast was true - the snow arrived. But we had our hearts set on getting some small stream fishing, though we figured the rain and snow had pretty much wrecked our chances. But nevertheless we persisted and wound up at the Moonbah.

One of the things I love about fishing are the little surprises that you get. You turn up to a river that was snowbound the day before and the water is 6.5°C, so you think it's going to be nymph fishing. But the Moonbah has a lot of weed and a lot of snags so it's a hard river to nymph fish. I persisted for a while and got a small one, and then I saw a fish in a backwater in the sunlight. I took the nymph off and put on a #12 Stimulator, and the fish came up and took it as sweet as you like. For the next few hours we had magnificent dry fly fishing in 6.5°C water. The fish were slow and you couldn't catch them in the fast water, but in any sort of soft edge or any little backwater they would lazily come up and en hale the fly.

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The diary: water - clear, high, 6.5°C!
Weather - Sunny, 11°C. Best Fly - #12
Yellow Stimulator. Fish caught - 12
browns and rainbows from ¾ - 1½ lb.

May:

By the middle of May I am thinking that the streams have had their day. Again you can catch fish to prove a point, but really it's the changing of the guard. By the middle of May things are starting to look up on the lakes. The Victorian central highland lakes are often very clear, and don't let the low water levels bother you. Tullaroop, for one, fishes very well under blue skies. We fished Tullaroop and Talbot reservoirs.

This was one of those days where something wasn't quite right, though I don't know exactly what it was. It looked really good and I had a follow from a huge fish. Max saw a big fish jump, and I got a semi-respectable brownie. It was a pleasant enough day but it doesn't always come together perfectly. But we still drove away thinking how lucky we were to have lakes like that nearby.

The diary: Weather - sunny, light wind then moderate northerly. Air temperature of 16°C and the water at 13°C. A few fish moved on evening at Talbot. Very few sighted at Tullaroop. Best Fly - Stick caddis. Fish caught - one 1½ lb brown

June:

Things went a little bit more to script when we went back Wartook in June. The lake wasn't as high as it had been the previous August, but it was coming up nicely and still very clear. This was a day that didn't feel good. There was a south-easterly wind that was one of those annoying winds that seem to follow you. It was cold too, 6°C being the top temperature and it was 3°C on our way back across the wall. Not the sort of day you'd expect fish to be jumping out of their skins, but in fact we saw a few. I had

just bought a new pair of lowlight polarized glasses and it was the perfect day to try them out. Within 15 minutes I had seen my first fish with them. I didn't catch that one but I caught one a little while later, and found some huge browns out over the flats and the bays on the south-eastern corner of Wartook. The good old Green Emu Bugger was the fly that did the best.

Diary entry: Cloudy with a moderate SE wind, air temperature of 6°C, water at 11°C, clear, rising, and at 60%. Best Flies - Green Emu Bugger and Magoo. Fish caught were two 5 lb browns and two 2½ lb rainbows. Good fishing under bleak conditions. Fish were cruising in close to the SE corner of the wall and there were odd swirls out off the flats beyond the boulders.

July:

And for something a little different, every winter these days my friends and I, particularly Max and my brother Mark, head down the south-west coast for some bream fishing. It's mostly blind fishing on these big often discoloured rivers with no sign of life, and then with this little fly you suddenly conjure up something alive on the end of your line. It is very addictive. I like bream. They are fantastic fish and I always feel sorry for them because they are so old. A reasonable sized bream is probably about 30 years old, so I can never bring myself to kill them, which is a pity because they taste so good.

It's really beautiful fishing and very achievable. It's surprising how coloured the water can be before the fish can't find your fly. 50 cm visibility is no problem at all. Getting the fly down deep seems to help too, and giving them plenty of opportunity to grab it. A fish that grows to 40 cm in 30 years is obviously not an aggressive feeder.

The other thing to remember is that you

mustn't trout strike, because you'll never hook them if you do. You need to use the old strip strike. A highly recommended way of spending a winter's day, and we have a lot of good rivers in western Victoria where there are great estuaries for bream fishing.

The diary: Aire River, 11:00 am – 3:30 pm. Weather - patches of sun. Air temperature – 11°C and water at 10°C. Water conditions - 50 cm visibility, and a strong fresh, high tide at 5:15 pm. Best Flies - Black or Red Hammerhead, JC Bream Bugger. Most effective technique - deep, short strips, long pause. Fish caught – nine 35 – 40 cm bream.

So roll on season 2015 – 16 and I hope it's a great one for you all.



A fine bream from the Aire River

Bullen Merri & Warrnambool VFFA Trips

Bullen Merri Fishing Weekend Cancelled

Unfortunately the Bullen Merri trip has had to be cancelled this year. This trip has been a highlight of the VFFA calendar for many years, with the Saturday night dinner at Dr John Menzies residence an important feature of this event. However trip organiser Hugh Maltby has recently been informed that Dr Menzies' residence is not available this year. However Hughie is confident it will be on again next year, and will be scheduled again for October next year.

Warrnambool Weekend & Dinner

However the very popular annual trip to Warrnambool and District - from Friday, November 13, to Sunday, November 15, is definitely on.

We will fish a number of local rivers including the Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu and Moyne. These rivers offer a variety of fishing to some very big brown trout. Both wet and dry fishing styles may be employed, depending on the height and clarity of the water.

The President and members of the Warrnambool Fly Fishers will again guide us, and join us for a magnificent evening meal at Jim Blakeslee's Winery on the Saturday evening. Jim and his wife Trish will be our hosts. Members will each share the cost of this meal and provide their own drinks.

Again, details are still being finalised, but those who are interested in participating should contact Hugh Maltby on 0423 283 079 or email: redntag@hotmail.com.

The NOE for this trip is included as an insert.



VFFA Visits Snobs Creek Hatchery

Nineteen members and guests set forth on a drizzly Thursday morning to attend the Snobs Creek Hatchery for a very educational excursion. Neil Hyatt, the manager at the hatchery (and a new member of the VFFA), welcomed everyone with a hearty handshake and a hot coffee and settled us into the large conference room.

The Hatchery is based on water diversion from Snobs Creek which is a permanent spring-fed waterway in the Upper Goulburn Valley, with a small catchment relatively free of agriculture.

After a brief history of the hatchery, which was established in the 1950's, Neil opened the floor to questions, which came thick and fast. Members were quickly brought up to date with the latest stockings of both native and imported species and Neil said that although the

staff at Snobs Creek had been cut from 30 to 12 in recent years (mostly scientists sent to other laboratories), they were still able to stock about a million salmonoids annually due to the automation of the hatchery. That particular day there were only 3 staff on duty, the others being on annual leave, sick leave or holidays. His answer to the question about how much of the license fees go into fisheries research was disheartening to say the least. Most is absorbed into "consolidated revenue"

At the conclusion of the question and answer session Neil organized for the BBQ to be fired up while he led us on an inspection of the hatchery. We started at the tanks with the larvae still with their yolk sack attached. Each of the tanks is labelled with the species and the barium content. Barium has replaced fin clipping in identifying salmonids by bathing late



Aerial view of the hatchery, taken with Ian Sambell's drone

stage yolk-sac larvae in a barium solution creating a unique fingerprint (mark) which can act as codes that enable tracing of fish back to the hatchery. The marks last the fish's lifetime and are detected in the otolith (fish ear bones) by specialised equipment. Marking methods had shown there is no effect on the fish's survival, growth, or the incidence of larval deformities compared to unmarked control fish. Further, the amounts of barium used to create the marks are so small that they pose no problem for food safety. When asked how the VFFA could help with this identification program Neil said they only require the head of the trout to determine its origins, age, etc.

Stocking gets underway each April with three sizes released. Yearlings of 30g+, advanced yearlings of 150g+, and spent broodstock ranging from 1.5 to 3kg.

The next visit was to the "big girls" pen. These were 3 year old rainbows (hen broodstock) of impressive size which eagerly thrashed the surface when Neil threw some food pellets into the water. He indicated that there were about 200 in this tank and together with the same number of browns in the back tank they would be liberated into the Pondage and other 'family lakes' in the next few months. He then showed us the tanks with the 2016 and 2017 year broodstock ensuring plenty of salmonids for

Victoria's waterways in the coming years. We continued our stroll through the grounds before being led back to the kitchen where a carnivores' lunch was waiting. Sausages, chops and hamburgers between slices of fresh bread were quickly devoured over a glass of red.

After lunch Hamish thanked Neil for his time and effort in making the day so enjoyable for the members, and presented him with *The Country for an Angler* by R. Anthony Brothers. Neil thanked the members and guests for the gift and for taking an interest in their work and concluded by discussing Murray Cod liberations together with other natives and answered more questions. After a most enjoyable day some headed for home while others stayed on and tried their luck in the Pondage, hoping to hook one of those 6 kilogram ex-broodstock girls.

Ian Sambell



Some of the VFFA team visiting the hatchery. Another photo taken from the drone

Tasmanian Sea Runners

Paul Middleton is a Fisheries Officer with the Tasmanian Inland Fisheries Service. He is based at Devonport, and is a very keen fly fisher for trout. He has provided us with the following fascinating account on Tasmania's sea run brown trout.

Hello VFFA! Thank you for allowing me to write for your newsletter outlining some of the wonderful angling opportunities in the Island State to the south. As a Fisheries Officer with the Inland Fisheries Service here in Tasmania, and as an extremely keen angler myself, I thought I should tell you about some of the best fly fishing this area has to offer.

Tasmania's trout fishery is world class and unique for lots of reasons, and there are many different angling opportunities within a fishing season. One of my favourite parts of the trout angling calendar is chasing sea run brown trout in coastal rivers and lagoons throughout the springtime.

This is an annual event. The sea run fish enter estuarine waters and the lower reaches of rivers and chase the massive runs of whitebait as they make their way upstream on their annual migrations. The term 'whitebait' is a collective name for small transparent native fish that migrate from the sea into rivers and streams. It includes any of the following species: whitebait (*Lovettia sealii*), jollytail (*Galaxias maculatus*), climbing galaxias (*Galaxias brevipinnis*), spotted galaxias (*Galaxias truttaceus*), Tasmanian mudfish (*Neochanna cleaveri*) and Tasmanian smelt (*Retropinna tasmanica*). The whitebait runs are composed of these species, although species composition varies with tide, time and location. Most whitebait are juveniles, with the exception of *Lovettia sealii* which are adults migrating to spawn.

These migrations take place from mid-August through to mid-December,

peaking from mid-September through to mid-November. Fishing the incoming tide with whitebait wet flies during this period will result in catches of strong and fit silver bullets, that will get you used to the sight of your backing! Fishing hotspots for whitebait feeders are generally bottle necks in the whitebait migration, such as at river mouths, the first set of freshwater rapids on rivers, or at manmade weirs. Basically anywhere where there are congregations of whitebait there will usually be hungry trout. There is also the added incentive of some exceptionally large sea run fish being taken each year.

Specifically worthy of mention are some of the rivers on the state's rugged west coast. Bait runs on the west coast are traditionally later than elsewhere in the state, normally peaking during October and November. The Henty River is a favourite of mine, and it doesn't see a great deal of angling pressure. Whilst having a boat is useful for this water, there is a reasonable 4WD drive track into the estuary from the B27 Henty (Zeehan to Strahan) road. The track is about three kilometres long, so if you don't have a 4WD vehicle it can be walked in a bit over an hour. The track is mainly sand so there is little risk of getting bogged, and there are several grassy flats in this area which makes for good camping. There is an excellent online map website provided by the Tasmanian Government, at <http://maps.thelist.tas.gov.au>, that will give you an idea of the area if you are interested in finding out some more.

The main attraction of the Henty is the shallow sand flats, where sea-run trout frantically chase schools of bait fish right

up into three inch deep water. The result is massive splashes of frightened baitfish and crazy seagulls as the trout gorge themselves. Activity peaks at first and last light, particularly when these times align with an incoming tide. It makes for incredibly exciting sight fishing, and the best way to catch these fish is to cast your fly straight away to exactly where the bait showered, then just let it sit. The trout will smash the schools, and then return to that point to pick up any dead or wounded baitfish resulting from their attacks. Blind casting the main river channel will also result in catches of strong sea run fish. Keep an eye out for any groups of cormorants – these will give you an idea of where to focus your angling efforts.

About 20 kilometres to the north is the mouth of Little Henty River, which is a similar water to the Henty and well worth a visit. There is a short road extending from the south of the small shack township of Trial Harbour, which goes onto the beach about one kilometre from the river. It is advisable to park here and walk rather than attempt to drive onto the beach, as many vehicles have sunk into the sand and have been swallowed up by the incoming tide.

The watershed and fishing experience of the Little Henty is similar to that of the 'big' Henty, with the rivers flowing out through sand dunes over flats. This is unique on the West Coast in that most other rivers run out into the sea through densely forested valleys through deep channels and are not therefore as conducive to fly fishing. Again here you will find angry sea run brown trout smashing schools of whitebait in the river shallows. If you do visit this water, have your surf fishing gear with you also as there are large numbers of gummy and school shark caught of the beach after dark in this location!

Finally, the last water in this area I would draw your attention to is the Reece Dam on the Pieman River, which is roughly 40 kilometres north of the township of Zeehan. This dam marks the upward limit of whitebait migrations on this catchment, and as a result every year incredibly large quantities of whitebait end up congregated here. On several occasions I have seen whitebait here so thick it is possible to reach into the water and scoop up a handful of baitfish. It is common to see large bags of fish taken at this location. The Hydro-Electric activities here mean that it can be hit and miss. Water discharge from the dam is governed by the spot price of electricity, meaning that it is unpredictable when the water will flow. When there is no flow through the power station the fishing is generally poor. However the power stations runs for the vast majority of each day.

The large flows here make fly fishing extremely tough. I would recommend fishing the bank opposite the power station and car park (and this requires a difficult walk up the dam face and over behind the power station – not for the unfit or faint of heart), where flows are slightly lower and the landscape is more open, thus allowing for easier fly casting. One word of warning from the locals though is that if the water on the other side is rising the second turbine of the power station is starting, and if you don't head back to the other side within five minutes you can end up stranded with your vehicle on the opposite shore!

A 7 or 8 weight rod with at least 15 lb tippet as a minimum is necessary to fish this location. Even so you can still expect break offs on the sharp rocks. During the last angling season at this location I witnessed two trout caught that were in excess of 10 lb, along with several in excess of 4 lb and countless river fish around the 2 lb mark. It can be a form >>>

of 'extreme fishing', but take it from me the rewards can be extreme too!

These are just three rivers that host sea run brown trout throughout the spring period in the north-west of Tasmania. There are several more for those willing to put in the time to discover new areas, and trophy fish await those who master the art. Other rivers to investigate are the Arthur, Inglis, Leven, Forth, Mersey, Derwent and Huon, to name a few.

One thing to be wary of however - the hardest part of sea runner fishing is timing your visit with the presence of the whitebait. After heavy rains the bait will cease running until the flood waters have

subsided, and with this the fishing becomes extremely difficult. This also makes planning exact dates for a trip difficult. Hence if you are planning to visit Tasmania to chase sea-runners, it would be advisable to have a back-up fishing plan if the rivers are in flood. As I am sure you are well aware, there is excellent fishing for frog feeders in the Western Lakes at this time, which just happens to coincide with rainfall events. But, that's a topic for another article!

Paul Middleton

Fisheries Officer, Inland Fisheries Service



Lake Botsford – Central Plateau Tasmania

Richard Clark has fished Tasmania, and especially the Highland lakes around Miena, for many years. He is a very experienced and successful angler who has accrued a wealth of experience. Lake Botsford is a favourite, and in this article he shares some of his knowledge. Here are Richard's thoughts on this very popular Tassie lake:

Noel Jetson penned an article in a 1979 edition of *Fishing World* - 'Never Pass Up a Rise' – in which he gave an exciting account of fishing for big brown trout rising to duns hatching at Lake Botsford. This was at a time when many anglers drove straight past this lake on their way to other waters. That article triggered my lifelong passion for fishing in this fabulous wilderness area. Noel described this place as heaven, but equally warned it could also be hell – 'Take time to know it and go well prepared. Don't rush in for a bag of fish'. Wise words from a sage!

My first fishing trip to Tasmania was in the early 1980s with a group of Southern Fly Fishers, where my 'apprenticeship' began with a trip out to the Julian Lakes and then to some of the 19 Lagoons, including Lake Botsford. At that time my knowledge of these waters was limited



Richard sorting the gear for another day on Botsford

and so was my success, but it was the beginning of a steep learning curve.

Of all the Western Lakes on the Tasmanian Central Plateau Lake Botsford

is known for the superb wild brown trout that exist in its water. Its popularity attracts hundreds of anglers each season looking to experience that adrenaline rush when a big snout rises to suck down a small dry fly on the surface. Such is its reputation as a premier fishery it's fair to say everyone wants to catch a fish here. Not everyone succeeds.

Being an alpine environment the weather is very changeable, and often for the worse. This lovely shallow lake with its sandy, weedy, rocky bottom often offers perfect wade polaroiding opportunities for the enthusiast. You can spot fish from the bank or you can wade further out in your endeavour to find them. The challenges offered to the angler here are endless but a willingness to adapt to the prevailing weather condition is paramount.

Throughout the season you will regularly see fish on the bottom with their snouts in the sand feeding on what must be their staple diet - isopods. The challenge is to get their attention when their eyes are firmly fixed on the bottom. If they won't look up, try a small wet fly or nymph placed well ahead. Over the summer they are more attuned to surface food and you can expect to find fish cruising mid-water and feeding during a dun hatch, a beetle fall, stoneflies or an ant hatch, leading to a perfect opportunity to present a small Red Tag. During a calm period it is good practice to stop moving and look for rises, and to also avoid spooking fish that are lying doggo on the bottom while waiting for the wind to spring up again, especially if under pressure from anglers.

The lake originally had a few trout that had come up a small creek from Lake Baillie during a very wet year, but it has no regular natural recruitment of trout. Since 1971 the then IFC (now IFS since 2000) introduced a regular stocking

program of mainly adult brown trout from the Great Lake, with some variations that included fry and fingerlings, both diploid & triploids.

While not number specific the annual stocking program is outlined in the IFS Inland Recreational Fishery Management Plan 2008 -18, which is currently under review. Its aim is 'To develop & sustain a wild brown trout fishery in the Central Highlands including some trophy waters'.

Over the years I have made this wonderful area my preferred annual fishing location with all its challenges and variations offered throughout the season.

Perhaps the most notable change I have seen is the significant increase in fishing pressure. Don't expect to have the lagoon to yourself but be prepared to share it with other anglers, unless of course you are willing to go for a long walk. Typically the weather is arctic, and if you are lucky enough to have one blue sky day the cars invariably swarm in. When the weather is foul you have the 19 Lagoons to yourself. Lake Botsford is well placed at the road junction to Lake Kay and Lake Ada to have a quick stop to survey the water, check the number of rods, and perhaps have a chat with other anglers, before making the decision to stay or to travel on. I find Lake Ada and Lake Kay are also exceptional fishing waters that offer wonderful tailing and dun hatches.

During the 1980s the IFS stocking of adult brown trout varied from 200 up to 400 as well as liberating a large numbers of triploid rainbow trout - fry, fingerlings and yearlings. No doubt the larger browns had a feeding frenzy on a number of these fry but survivors grew to 7 and 8 lb and possibly bigger. On one occasion I had the lake to myself, and was fishing it in strong winds, heavy cloud cover and rain when I noticed what appeared to be a plastic bag floating on the surface that

kept disappearing then reappearing. As I got closer I realised it was the tail of a big fish feeding on isopods on the bottom. Its tail had a distinctive split near the top. I followed this fish for an hour during which it continued on its tail up, tail down feeding pattern, quite oblivious to me. Every time I got close enough to cast the tail went down. Needless to say I didn't hook up but my heart was pumping in the red zone. I believe this was one of those triploid rainbows estimated at 8 lb as I was thigh deep in water. I never did hear who caught this fish. A year or so later I did manage to hook into one of these big ones (with me running through the water trying to keep up) only to be beaten when it came straight back at me at full speed after a powerful run well into the backing.

In the early 1990s the IFS annual stocking was maintained at 200 to 300 adults with a few triploid brown yearlings tossed in for trial, presumably due to increased fishing pressure. At this time I started to fish with Charlie Thorpe, one of the most enthusiastic nice guys you would ever meet. He had a bad habit of holding his rod high when we were searching the edges which tended to annoy me. However he always had his fly on the water and he did catch plenty of fish. He copped all my abuse with a smile and we enjoyed great camping and fishing together in the Julian Lakes and Christies Creek systems for several years.

Together we started to spend more time fishing the Little Pine system and the 19 Lagoons - Lake Botsford in particular. On one occasion we arrived at Botsford about mid-morning. I recorded:

'Very cold, blue sky, barometer rising, calm to light west breeze. Some rods leaving. Visibility very good. Fished middle to bottom end and started sighting immediately. Fish doggo and spooky. I

took a good strong fish on a #14 Red Tag and had a few refusals. Another two rods left so we had the water to ourselves after lunch with the breeze increasing to make perfect conditions. Covered the same water as the morning and sighted fish easily. Chas took two fish in quick succession near the rock. One had a Red Tag already in it's top lip. He saw more fish than me! I took a fish 12 foot in front swimming straight at me. Sun and wind behind made it easy to see fish. Often swimming down wind. Got good hook ups on these. Fished the flats until 6:15pm. Fish average size was 4 lb and strong. Warm & sunny. We both used the same Red Tag fly all day, only flicking it dry ready to cast again. The fish didn't care whether the fly was on the surface or under it. A day in Paradise!'



'A day in Paradise' - Lake Botsford - 1995

We returned the next day in similar weather conditions and achieved similar results, but on this occasion shared the water with Peter Hayes and his client John. Jim Allen arrived in the afternoon and out-fished us all.

When the weather was in our favour we often ran between nearby lagoons to capitalise on the best light and polaroiding opportunities, which may have been counterproductive in terms of fish grassed, but we continued to gain knowledge of other waters within the 19 Lagoons. Charlie also captured his personal best with a 9 lb brown during one of these 'runs'. We continued to fish Lake Botsford every season, often sighting those elusive big fish and thinking we could easily spend much more time on this lake. But other lagoons were also very attractive and offering their own unique challenges and rewards.

During the 1990s and beyond the IFS continued to stock Botsford annually with 250 – 350 adult brown trout from Liawenee Canal on the Great Lake or Hydro Creek at Arthurs Lake.

Later and during 2012 and 2013, 1000 brown trout triploid fry were liberated in lieu of adult fish, this in itself being a variation to the 'plan'. In 2014 the adult fish release was wound back to 100, maybe to give the fry a chance of survival as these fish were significantly larger than previous stockings. Anglers who fished at Botsford last season will attest that the average mature fish grassed weighed in at 2 kilogram, which I think was a marked improvement on the previous years.

One view put to me was that the IFS wanted to make Lake Botsford appear like a natural fishery with a range of fish sizes up to mature adults. As there are already many lakes and lagoons on the

plateau offering natural recruitment I'm sure most anglers will have a different perspective on this thinking. The IFS has recently clarified that only adult fish will be stocked at Lake Botsford this year onwards.

I made several trips to the Highlands last season. On my first trip I didn't get out to the western lakes due to heavy snow and bad weather. However in early December I was on my way to Lake Kay and called into Lake Botsford for one of my quick looks (remember Jetson). The water was high, it was windy and very rough, but I managed to spot a superbly conditioned fish cruising in mid-water that to my amazement ignored my point nymph and rose to take the large Red Tag indicator fly. It's hard to predict what these fish will take at times but it suggests the the fish must find the fly. In rough conditions I find you can drop a dry fly closer to a fish without spooking it. I then moved onto Lake Kay for a nice day on the lagoons.

In the New Year on my next trip I again called in during an extremely strong west wind, cloudy conditions, and water partly coloured. I counted 20 fish over two hours but only managed to prick one. I was able to wade very close to these fish and tried big dry flies, nymphs and wets, but all to no avail. In poor light I retired for the day!

I returned the next morning determined to make amends and I had the lake to myself. It was cold, blue sky with rolling cloud, and light breeze. Water levels were still relatively high and cloud reflection limited wade polaroiding so I opted to sight from the shoreline, which gave me a better range of visibility in which to spot fish. I searched for two hours without seeing a fin, then finally, a cruising fish that made the perfect rise to a #14 Geehi Beetle. One of those

excellently conditioned mature fish at 4½ lb. I left to fish other waters in the afternoon satisfied that Botsford still produced great fish. My sampling of fish at Lake Botsford last season was small but the fish were the best I have seen for a few years.

In my early days I was a purist dreaming about fishing in Tasmania under blue skies and casting dry flies! Reality set in very early when invariably confronted with weather variability that included snow falling during each month that I have ever fished the highlands. Fishing after the blast however can be very rewarding as the fish are often more settled and willing to grab a well presented fly.

Nowadays I adapt to the prevailing weather conditions, water levels, insect life (if any) and what I observe the fish doing (if I can see them) before making that important decision of how to fish and what fly to tie on.

My gear is very traditional for all my Western Lakes fishing. Depending on the wind strength I choose either a #5 or #6 fast taper rod for control and speed of presentation. Lines? Well I still prefer TT lines for general searching and occasionally use a WF taper for dun feeders, together with a 9 foot leader to an 8 lb point. Tie your knots carefully as these powerful fish will put them to the test! Personally I put more faith in presentation before other considerations such as fly choice (within reason), and of course fishing confidently is a most essential factor. Another essential is casting capability. I found a period of tournament casting helped develop the skills to cast confidently and with speed in all weather conditions.

Like all the western lakes, fishing Lake Botsford is not easy. Catching fish is not a

given. It can be disappointing and frustrating, and it can be very rewarding. For short term visitors with skills the biggest hurdle is the weather. If you can crack it for a blue sky day - thank the fishing gods and drive no further! For those more fortunate and who can wait for the best days to arrive - good luck and tight lines. For those who choose to fish on a bad day, be optimistic as the sun does occasionally break through the cloud and you can often find fish all in a small window - all on your own!

I feel confident the IFS understands the effect of heavy fishing pressure on Lake Botsford. However, with the current regulations allowing a maximum bag limit of only one fish daily, I cannot help feel the 2015 stocking of adult brown trout may not meet the demand. Time will tell on this view.

If you find that Lake Botsford is overloaded with too many rods on a given day, there are the other 18 Lagoons and beyond on the Plateau. But fly fishing on a pristine alpine water like this one on a perfect day is 'Heaven'.

For my last cast I suggest you spend the time and become very familiar with the water. Fish barren water quickly and slow up when the water looks 'fishy' or when you see a fish as you may see more, and it can be useful to keep records for reference before next season. Prepare well and fish confidently!



A Letter to the Editor from Greg French

Hi there Lyndon,

Thanks for the newsletters. I especially enjoyed Jim Blakeslee's article in the July issue on fishing for golden trout in the John Muir Wilderness. (In fact I have just returned from hiking in the adjacent Golden Trout Wilderness.)

My thoughts on Josh Bradshaw's article in the August issue:

Josh is dead right to say that the mayfly hatches in the main hydro lakes have been enigmatic. In Arthurs Lake they are yet to recover from the prolonged low levels that occurred during the last drought; in Woods and Little Pine there have been some very good dun hatches but, yes, the trout have not always risen to the occasion.

When the hatches fail, this always makes things hard for anglers who are not prepared to adjust to the conditions. But like Josh said, there was some great nymphing and streamer fishing to be enjoyed. Also, I had some seriously good polaroiding at both Arthurs and Little Pine.

When the hatches are iffy, the best advice I can give dedicated trout hunters (anglers who like sight fishing) is to concentrate on fishing clearwaters. Again, as Josh said, the polaroiding in Lake St Clair and Lake King William has never been better. And to these hotspots I would add Lake Echo and the Western Lakes.

And now a little summary of my own:

Last season, for the obvious reasons, I didn't fish Arthurs, Bronte, Woods or Little Pine as much as I have in previous seasons. However, I did a lot of fishing in the Chudleigh Lakes and around Lake Ina, and in both cases the fishing was better than I can ever recall (especially during the black spinner hatches). The fishing in Meston and Junction was also as good as it gets, with the size and condition of the rainbows at all-time highs.

Moreover, I did a lot of polaroiding in Gunns Lake and Little Lake for generally excellent results. And finally I did a fair bit of guiding on the Mersey River in the Merseylea and Kimberly regions, and here again the quality and quantity of the fish was the best it has been in my lifetime.

Whereas some other anglers have declared last season to be tough, I'd simply say it was unusual. For me, it ended up amongst my very best.

Kind regards

Greg

FLY OF THE MONTH

Frank Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Nymph (the PTN)



This fly is simply one of the most famous of all nymphs, and strangely it hasn't been featured in our Fly of the Month series, or at least not recently. What we will describe here is Sawyer's original tying.

The pattern was first conceived and tied by Frank Sawyer, an English River Keeper. He devised the pattern for use on the chalkstreams of Southern England, and designed it to imitate several species of the Baetis family, generally referred to as the 'olives'. It quickly became world famous, and is certainly the fly for which Sawyer is best known.

Sawyer wanted a fly that was quick to tie, that would make a neat entry into the water, and would then sink to the required depth. In his book *Nymphs and the Trout*, first published in 1958, he describes the method of tying and fishing the nymph. The design of the fly is significantly different from other flies in that he did not use thread to construct the fly, instead opting to use very fine copper wire. This had two effects - it added weight to the fly, enabling it to be fished deeper than similar patterns, and it added a subtle brightness to an otherwise drab fly.

The references say: "In streams and rivers, the Pheasant Tail Nymph can be presented below the surface if required, but it is at its most productive when allowed to sink close to the river bed on a dead drift and then gently raised in the water to imitate the behaviour of the natural insect. This technique has become known as the "Induced Take", and the development of this technique may be considered to be as important as the development of the fly itself."

Materials for Sawyer's Pheasant Tail Nymph

Hook: Nymph hook, typically sizes 12 – 18.

Thread: Very thin dark copper wire.

Tail: Barbs from the tail feather of the Cock Pheasant.

Body: Barbs from a red-brown feather from the centre tail of a European Cock Pheasant.

Rib: Fine copper wire.

Tying Procedure using only copper wire as the tying thread

1. Start winding the copper wire right behind the eye. Wind it along the shank in close even turns for about a quarter of the shank length, then wind it back over these turns to the eye, then back towards the bend again, thus creating a small thorax of copper wire with three layers of copper wire.
2. Keep winding the copper wire in loose turns to just before the bend. Now cut a few Pheasant Tail barbs from the tail feather, the number depending on the hook size. A size 14 hook would typically have 4 or 5 barbs.
3. Even the tips up, then tie them in using the copper wire so that the tips of the barbs point back past the bend to form the tail of the nymph. Apparently the nymphs this fly was imitating had short tails, so to be true to Sawyer's original pattern the tail should only be about a third to half of the hook shank in length.
4. At this point Sawyer used to wrap the copper wire around the barbs to form a type of rope, which he would then wind along the shank to form the abdomen. However this may result in an abdomen that is a little too bulky, so an alternative is to wrap the barbs all the way up to the eye in close turns, and then while holding them there with one hand (this is fiddly and tricky) wind the copper wire from the tail up to the eye in loose turns to form the rib.
5. It is also suggested that you should wind the ribbing with turns opposite to the direction the barbs are wound, so that the ribbing doesn't sink in between the barbs and get lost to view. This also gives more protection to the fly from sharp trout teeth.
6. The stubs of the barbs are now held at the hook eye while two or three turns of the wire are used to bind the barbs down. Then make a wide open single turn of the wire to the back of the thorax.
7. Bend the stubs of the barbs back over the thorax to form a wing case and tie them down with two or three firm turns of the copper wire.
8. To finish the fly use your hand make a couple of firm half hitches to tie off the copper wire behind the wing case. Trim off the waste stubs and your PTN is now completed.
9. A confession: in tying my fly for the photo I cheated a bit and used thread at various times to hold things in place. I just hope the trout don't notice or object.

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

September

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

October

- 11 Dam Day with Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers' at Thorpdale
- 15 Lunchtime General Meeting – 12:00 pm to 2:00 pm
Speaker: Jim Allen
- 19 (Note - Monday) Council Meeting - 7:30 pm
- 23 – 24 Bullen Merri Trip at Camperdown
Event Co-ordinator - Hugh Maltby

November

- 13 - 15 Warrnambool Trip
Event Co-ordinator - Hugh Maltby
- 19 General Meeting - 8:00 pm
Speaker: Malcolm Crosse
- 23 Council Meeting - 7:30 pm

December

- 17 Christmas Dinner – 6:30 for 7:00 pm
Speaker: Rick Wallace – Journalist with The Australian and keen fly fisher

February 2015

- 8 First Council for 2016 - 7:30 pm
- 13 – 19 Tasmanian Trip at Hayes on Brumbys
Event co-ordinator - Hamish Hughes
- 25 First general meeting for 2016 – A Lunch Gathering (Details TBC)