

FLY LINES



SEPTEMBER 2019

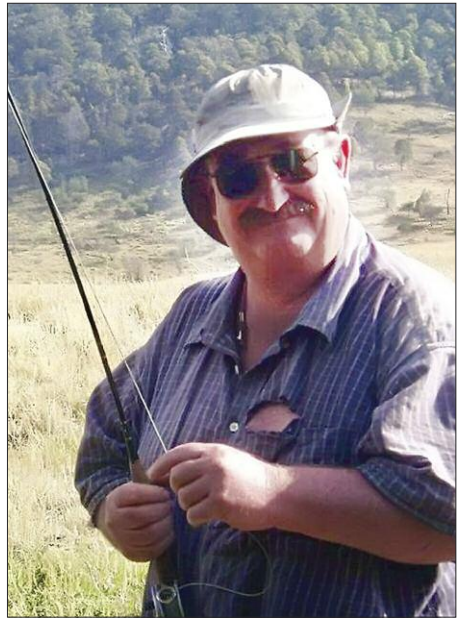
Vale John Denis Philbrick

The VFFA has lost one of its true characters throughout its history with the sad and sudden death of John Philbrick. Fly fisherman, fly tier, mountaineer, barrister, Philbrick (as he was known) was a larger than life character who leaves an enormous legacy.

Absolutely instrumental in the development of polaroiding on windy blue sky days in Tasmania and developing a slim nymph (Philbrick's Nymph) to undo spooky lake trout in Tasmania, VFFA members and all Australian fly fishers owe him a huge debt.

In this issue of *Fly Lines* people who fished with John over many years share their thoughts and experiences. Guide and close friend Peter Hayes describes him as "a staunchly unique individual." Jim Allen, who fished with him when they were teenagers, describes him as "true champion", and Bob Roles who also knew him from the earliest of days describes John as "a true great character" and "very accomplished in all facets of trouting."

John was a unique character and we shall miss him at VFFA functions; we shall miss his wisdom and wit.



Condolences to John's family and friends.

John was a true brother of the angle. Let's picture him waist deep in water, fly rod in hand and spotting a big one.

Dermot O'Brien

The September AGM

Thursday, September 19,
8:00 pm,
at the Kelvin Club

Members are reminded that the September meeting will be our Annual General Meeting. President Chris Gray is keen to remind us that all members are welcome, in fact strongly encouraged, to attend, and all financial members are eligible for nomination and election to the Council. Notice papers relevant to the AGM are included with this newsletter, these being the Nomination Form, the Appointment of Proxy Form, and the AGM agenda.

Council meets are held on the last Monday of each month, and all the management issues involved in running the Association are dealt with at these meetings, so that our monthly general meetings can be given over totally to guest speakers, auctions, fly tying demonstrations, ...

If you have experience and skills in business and management and are keen to see our Association remain vibrant and responsive to the needs of member then please contact our president or secretary to indicate your interest in nominating for Council. Council meetings commence at 6:30 pm and usually finish by 8:00 pm. They are often entertaining and invariably lively. You would enjoy your participation as well as contributing valuable insights and points of view for the benefit of our Association.

Unfortunately a few highly valued councillors are retiring this year after many years on the Council, so there is a need for new people to step forward and offer their skills.

The AGM date – Thursday, September 19, at the Kelvin Club.

We would encourage all members to join us for a meal beforehand, but PLEASE make a booking for dinner by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, September 18, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



Tichborne watercolour – Waipahi River

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Tichborne watercolour – Waiohine River

President's Message

It is with deep sadness I write for our Newsletter this month. The passing of John Philbrick filtered through the VFFA the morning after our annual dinner on Friday August 23. John presented to us at our December 2018 dinner; an occasion that will be remembered by all who attended and listened to him share his stories of fishing the Goulburn River, tying his famous "Philbrick Nymph", and developing the now highly regarded technique of polaroiding fish through the back of waves in Tasmania's highland lakes. A lot of members have known John for many years and enjoyed fishing with him or being on the receiving end of his wise advice. Some members have shared their stories in this month's newsletter.

A few months ago I engaged a guide in East Gippsland for a day. The morning's fishing was reasonably good, and whilst enjoying a spot of lunch we discussed the various fishing identities we both knew. John Philbrick's name came up, and the guide was chuffed we both knew him and he then offered us a "Philbrick afternoon", taking us to a number of his best locations throughout the afternoon.

Choco and I also had the opportunity to fish Philbrick's famous nymph on the Tasmania trip in February this year. We sighted a large brown methodically sampling the food running through his beat. Choco presented a couple of flies that were ignored, so changed to a Philbrick's Nymph. A perfect presentation resulted in a strike and a short time later the hefty brown was landed.

John will be missed by us all. He has left us with many great memories of his bold personality and considerable contribution



to our Association. Every time you put on your polaroid glasses and see a fish in the water, spare a thought for John Philbrick.

Our Annual Dinner was well attended. We enjoyed a wonderful night together, with members and their guests travelling from far and wide to hear Tamie Fraser AO as our guest speaker. A few of our members assisted on the night by taking to the lectern in cameo roles. Our thanks to Hubert Reichelt, Andrew Mossman and Wes Betts for their time and generosity in tying huge numbers of Purple Haze Parachute flies, Possum Emergers, and the jewellery gift boxes to store them in.

We were well supported by our sponsors and member donations for the raffle and auction, so in return we must support these generous people when considering our next gear purchases. Their details are in the newsletter.

A brave group of our members rolled up at Millbrook Lakes a few weeks ago for our first visit there. It was cold and the water in the four lakes our group fished was cold, too, so not much insect activity and only a small number of fish caught – something perhaps to be expected at this

time of year. No doubt with warmer weather we will have more success in our November visit to Millbrook. Our sincere thanks to Mark Weigall for giving us the opportunity to visit this fabulous fishery. There is brief report on our August visit later in this issue.

The trout season for our Victorian rivers opened on Saturday September 7. For those of us venturing out, enjoy it all and stay safe as the snow melts.

VFFA members and family are invited for a private tour of the Snobs Creek fish hatchery with Neil Hyatt, Salmonid Supervisor, on Sunday, September 15. The tour will start at 11:00 am and take about one to one and a half hours to complete. The tour will finish with a barbeque at the pond. Please register via email or call Bill Fary with your name and those of your guests by September 7.

Email: pbfary@gmail.com or text or call Bill on his mobile 0408 037 540.

The Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers are hosting the VFFA members for a day's fishing on private dams on Sunday, October 6. Please pencil the date in and confirm your attendance. It's a day not to be missed with some great fishing.

Our Annual General Meeting is on Thursday, September 19, at 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club. We have some long-standing Council executives who are keen to get some support on the Council with members wishing to get involved. Council meets on a monthly basis. The commitment is a couple of hours per month and is very rewarding. Please come along and show your support. If you would like any more detail, please feel free to contact any of our current executive.

Tight lines and heavy nets for the month ahead.

Chris Gray



The October Meeting with Chris Wisniewski



Chris will be the guest speaker at our October meeting. He works with the Tasmanian Inland Fisheries Service and has indicated that for his presentation in October he planned to

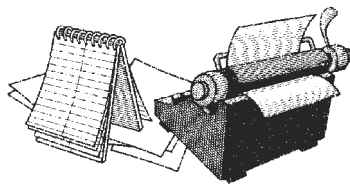
give us an overview of the 2019/20 Tasmanian trout fishing season and associated fisheries management strategies. Chris will tell us about fisheries performance assessments, winter trout transfers and stocking, the Carp Management Program and the future of Lake Sorell, an update on angler access to

rivers and upgrades to infrastructure including boat ramps, along with details of the World Fly Fishing Championship in December.

Chris is also keen to give us some suggestions on what the new season in Tasmania offers - what places will be worth a look, which lakes will fish well, and what rivers we should keep on our lists.

For the those of us who fish Tasmania and who are planning a trip there sometime in the next few months this will be a very useful and informative talk. One not to be missed.

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"More than half the intense enjoyment of fly fishing is derived from the beautiful surrounds, the satisfaction felt from being in the open air, the new lease of life secured thereby, and the many, many pleasant recollections of all one has seen, heard and done." (Charles Orvis, founder of the Orvis company, 1856)

"It is not we who are the heroes with our fish stories, it is the trout themselves. They have managed to survive drought, selfishness, and greed." (Ailm Travler, Fly Fishing Folly)

"The sporting qualities of a fish are dependent neither on its size nor its weight, but on the effort of concentration, the skill and mastery the fish demands from the fishermen." (Charles Ritz, A Fly Fisher's Life)

I gave high praise to Tom Sutcliffe's new book, *Yet More Sweet Days*. It is indeed a fabulous read, written by a man who writes well and who reveals in the pages of his book a deep understanding of fly fishing. A chapter in his new book on fishing small streams is as close as you would get to a comprehensive guide on how to fish such waters.

I included a photo of Tom fishing a stream in our August issue. But as soon as the August pdf file was emailed out to those who prefer the digital version I received an email from Peter Brigg, a South African fly fisher who has written for us, telling me that the photo of Tom Sutcliffe on page 8 of our August newsletter was, unfortunately, not Tom Sutcliffe. I won't even attempt to explain how this disaster happened. But I have apologised to Tom, who was not at all



Tom is a superb angler and a passionate and skilled photographer



bothered by my foul up. So here are two photos (above) of the real Tom Sutcliffe – the skilled angler and the passionate photographer.

>>>

And talking about photos, I also came across a beautiful photo of April Vokey fishing whilst simultaneously showing the ropes to her new daughter Adelaide. April is a VFFA member and was quite happy for us to include her photo in this issue.



April Vokey is a brilliant angler and is internationally renowned. Her young daughter Adelaide is watching mum here to get some top hints.

Like so many of us I was shocked and greatly saddened at the news that John Philbrick had died on Friday, August 23. His contribution to the VFFA has been immense. He was editor of our newsletter for 13 years, a member of Council for many years, and president in the period 2002 to 2004. He joined the VFFA in 1970 and was endorsed as a Life Member in 2004. He played a major part in the production of our first VFFA book, *Geehi to Great Lake*, and wrote many of the articles in this book. He was well known and a great friend to many of us.

John was a superb angler and a recognised master of the fly fishing craft.

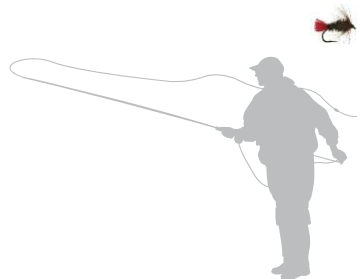
He was guest speaker at last year's Christmas Dinner, and his presentation was brilliant. He was in sparkling form. His account of how he used to gain access to Leake's Lagoon on the far side of the Goulburn River by swimming across the river in his underwear holding his fishing gear high in his left hand while paddling madly with his right hand simply beggars belief. The Goulburn is wide and the current is strong. John certainly lived up to his early nickname of 'Fearless'. He seemed indestructible too, but tragically his big heart finally gave out.

I first met John ten years ago when I was taking over from him as editor. He was certainly a commanding and, to me, intimidating personality. But he was also totally supportive and continued to write great articles for us. In these last few years he emailed me often. In his travels he would wander out onto the balcony of whatever posh hotel he was staying at, take a photo on his iPad of some stunningly beautiful beach or lake or river in the foreground, and email the photo to me, often with some whimsical comment.

John had many friends so naturally this issue includes a number of tributes to him. In some cases space has forced us to edit the contributions a little, but the complete set of full tributes will be put up on our website.

John, we miss you. Thank you for so much.

Lyndon



In Memory of John Philbrick

... Bob Roles

The fly fishing fraternity has lost one of its true great characters in the passing of John Denis Philbrick, who suffered heart failure whilst travelling in Turkey with his wife Jean. John was 72 years old.

I first met John through Turville's tackle shop in North Melbourne when he was studying law at Ormond College at Melbourne University. He was fondly nicknamed "Fearless" by fellow students. This description seems appropriate given his winning performance as 'Mr University 1969', which required the winner to consume two full bottles of VB beer, quickly followed by consuming two meat pies, then climbing a ladder to a greasy bar followed by monkey-like movements to the other side without falling into the cesspool below.

John joined the VFFA as a young man. He first fished for trout in the Plenty River, the Yarra River, and the King Parrot Creek with his school friend Rodney Whiteway. They were both hungry to become fly fishers, and to this end read David Scholes to learn as much as they could. John was a lawyer by trade, pursuing good outcomes for people injured in workplace accidents. He possessed a razor-sharp intellect complemented by an acerbic wit, which he used to intimidating effect with anyone who engaged him in robust debate. (I have first-hand experience of this!)

John progressed through the legal ranks to become a Queen's Counsel and later Senior Counsel. It was during this period he became good friends with the late Bill Morgan-Paylor, who became a County Court judge and VFFA President in 2004.



John was the keynote speaker at the 2018 VFFA Christmas Dinner

They both loved fishing Tasmania where they had many trips together, often staying at Wisloca cottage on the North Esk River.

Many members would remember John's 13-year contribution as our newsletter editor in the years 1995 to 2008. John immersed himself in this role as he liked presenting articles himself in his quirky style. Who could forget those "Phil from Blessington" stories? John also wrote angling items using the synonym "Campaspe".

John retained his position as editor and also became VFFA president in 2002, a significant contribution to the Association.

People often asked me if John was a good fisherman. In my opinion he was very accomplished in all facets of trout, and angling in general for that matter. Remember, he learned to fish for different species as a teenager, which left him with a very good understanding of trout and fish behaviour. There is a photo of a 13-year-old David >>>

Scholes in *The Way Of An Angler* where the caption reads: "... I even began to look like a fly fisher". I would put John Philbrick in that category.

He was a good friend who was very generous in sharing his angling knowledge. I will miss him on the riverbank. I will also treasure my remaining Philbrick Nymphs.



John Philbrick

... from Jim Allen

Our Association and the Australian world of fly fishing lost a true champion with the recent death of John Philbrick. He was a deep thinker and often took a very serious approach to his angling. I've written notes in this newsletter and elsewhere on my thoughts of John being the father of modern day polaroiding and its application to fishing under blue skies on windy days.

His other contribution is his slim nymph, now known simply as Philbrick's Nymph. I don't think he liked the idea of it being named after him in the early days, but in more recent times, when it really did succeed for many of us who fished it, giving greatly increased captures, his attitude changed. Actually, I think he was rather proud of it in the end, and at many an annual dinner or auction of this Association a small presentation of his nymphs would be made available for sale and his flies would then be highly sought after.

I first fished with John Philbrick in the 1960s on the Goulburn River here in Victoria, at the Howqua inlet of Lake Eildon, and at Kiandra in the Snowy Mountains. Upon receiving the news of his untimely death my thoughts went to our times together with a fly rod. Memories flooded back of late afternoons at Bostock and Moorabool Reservoirs, and then arriving back very late to the warmth of the Myrniong Pub



John loved fishing the Monaro region. This photo, from Easter 1985, shows John with Christine and Greg Kelly.

where Clarry Jose fed us huge steaks topped with fried onions. We drove home near midnight. Her Majesty's Constabulary didn't have breathalysers in those days, fortunately.

I remembered times together in Tasmania in my first shack. Of cooking roast dinners and drinking good wine with serious conversations on world affairs. His dog Penstock in the sleeping bag with him. Wonderful days spent at

Arthurs and Penstock, and tramping over the Nineteen Lagoons - particularly Flora and Odell and Lake Fergus. All of this way before we had the luxury of fishing out of boats. Early mornings chasing along the shores of Little Pine Lagoon casting at tails along the shore. The increased fishing pressure has made this fishing a rarity today by comparison.

As we grew older and less agile our fishing changed. We both fished guided, out of boats both in New Zealand and in saltwater, as well at Christmas and the Cook Islands. John still continued climbing mountains in Tibet and New Zealand.

He was big. Big in kindness, big in stature, and for those of us who would count him as a friend big in every way. I think the word indefatigable comes to mind when I think of him and our times together. One of his other mates remarked to me a few days ago, "better to live for 70 years having a good time than looking after yourself and living 90 miserable ones on a lifetime of diet and fitness regimes." I think our recently departed member John Philbrick certainly did that!

Good Friend John Philbrick

... from Peter Hayes

I first came across the great John Philbrick some 40 years ago. We were in the bar of the Great Lake Hotel and it was New Year's Eve. I was just 18 years old and even though I had just four years of experience in fly fishing I somehow knew that he was a legend in the sport.

At the end of the countdown to midnight everyone tried their best to kiss the few women silly enough to still be in the bar full of dirty drunk fishermen and more drunk possum skinkers. Not John. Instead he shouted instructions to his trusty dog 'Penstock' and the ever-obedient dog immediately lay on her back with all four legs splayed out. I wasn't sure what was going to happen next!

John was responsible for developing the bright sky, windy day, polaroiding technique that I had been using while camped out at the Julian Lakes. I would not have been able to experience the fabulous fishing of the previous two



John often fished the Macquarie River in Tasmania with Peter Hayes at the oars weeks if it wasn't for this great man's ground-breaking discovery years earlier.

Weeks later I happened to walk down the aisle of a plane on my return to Victoria and came across John once again. He was sitting in an exit row seat with his muddy and well-worn Scarpa walking boots, short gaiters, shorts and a king gee type shirt. He looked particularly dishevelled and dirty – which he was. John had been >>>

camped in the bush for weeks polaroiding the highland lakes and tarns of his beloved Tasmania. He simply couldn't care less what people thought of his appearance. Little did anyone on the plane know that at that time John was a leading Victorian barrister on his way to becoming a QC of some note.

Fast forward thirty or more years. I'm now a fishing guide with a lodge in Tasmania and John has come back into my life in a major way. During the past ten years he has often stayed at the lodge for weeks at a time, and for several visits each season. He kept a car at the lodge, and in the early days a zodiac boat, then his second boat which he called Camilla (the other woman).

I often guided John, who by then had become more than twice (in size) the great man that he was all those years earlier. I, and many of my regular clients at the lodge, were lucky to be blessed with his regular attendance and his dinner table opinions.

In his time at the lodge he became a great friend and mentor to me and many others. He had a generosity of spirit towards any new fly fishers in spades. John was an experienced and skilled angler who had 'been around' – mostly

before anyone else. He was always well worth listening to.

I loved the fact that John was such a staunchly unique individual. I wish I had more of that in me. He hated what he called the 'herd mentality' in any aspect of life and especially in fishing matters. He was not a numbers man, but David Hemmings says that he still holds the record for fish caught drifting the Macquarie River. On one balmy calm day John and Lester managed 20 fish - all on his beautiful tie of a Macquarie Red.

John had an observant eye on many matters and possessed a sharp mind and quick tongue. He was an exceptional writer and great wordsmith. I was in awe of his intellect and I owe part of who I have become to the osmotic teachings of this great man.

In more recent times he told me all about the very expensive suit he purchased and the \$60,000 he spent renovating his teeth. "Well Peter, you can't go off to the Opera in Vienna looking like a vagrant, can you?" Maybe he did care a bit about what people thought, after all?

John was a remarkably complex person and this world will be a lesser place without him guiding us.



John Philbrick

... from his friend Graeme Leith

The ranks of the "old guard" have been further thinned with the unfortunate death of John Philbrick, a great angler and sportsman, a fearless hiker and a more than worthy opponent in an argument.

I first met John when he was studying law at Melbourne University and picking

'spuds' near Deloraine in Tasmania during vacations because he wanted to be close to trout water. And for the rest of his life he made sure of that.

In those days, the mid to late 1960s, a disparate group, Messrs Allen, Roles, Philbrick, Whiteway and Leith, fished from the Goulburn to the Eucumbene,

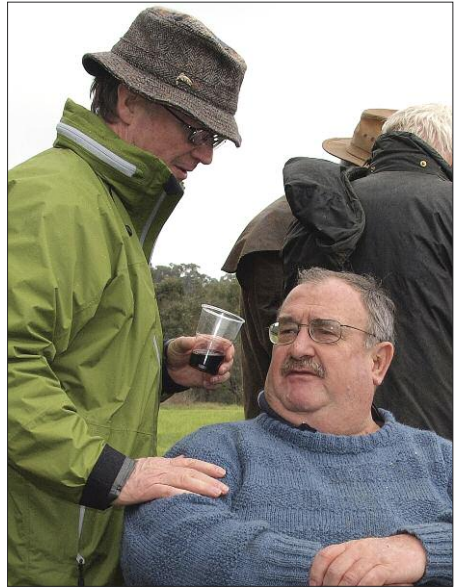
the Bobundara and Maclaughlin in NSW, and then later the lakes and lagoons of the Tasmanian highlands, where he cemented his friendship with his beloved Penstock Lagoon and Lake Kay.

His trusty Marechal 'Cyclomoteur' tent was often erected at Kay, sometimes holding Roles and Philbrick, and often in the atrocious weather that country can provide. We sometimes shared houses in Melbourne too, and as fishing was a more important endeavour than the cleaning of clothes Monday mornings often saw a dishevelled John at the door of Delmonico's menswear shop purchasing a new shirt to wear to court that day.

About then, the early seventies, I introduced John to Lake Fergus, and we hiked in there most years. On one trip I noticed that John had developed a limp and commented on it. He thought he had a stone in his boot. "Do you want to stop and take it out?" "No." "Why not?" He threw me his lopsided and enigmatic grin. "Well, if I did that I wouldn't be John Philbrick, would I?" We kept on walking.



This photo was provided by John a few years ago. He loved fishing the San River in Poland.



John with one of his close VFFA friends David Grisold sharing a moment at a casting day

Once we were caught in a blizzard at our camp near Lake Furgage and had to get out despite the weather. John's tent was too heavy to carry in the circumstances, so we had to leave it there with John insisting that he'd return later and collect it. He did return days later when we were safely back in Melbourne and found the place flooded and the tent full of water. He tried to sleep in his waders and soaked sleeping bag. Then in the morning he hiked out to the Augusta wall and hitch-hiked to Deloraine, sodden sleeping bag and all.

John certainly earned the appellation we gave him: "Fearless Philbrick". "Indomitable" would have suited him equally well.

R.I.P. John. You've left us with some wonderful memories, and of course the Philbrick Nymph.

John Philbrick: The Early Years

... from Rod Whiteway

John Philbrick was a fly fishing legend, but I knew him when he was happy fishing with the humble worm for roach, redfin, blackfish and eels in the Plenty River around Greensborough. I lived at Briar Hill, and John lived on a farm on the Plenty River on the outskirts of Greensborough.

We met at Macleod High School and were soon drawn to each other by the shared love of Aussie Rules Football and fishing. We fished together often in the Plenty with bait, and soon our parents were dropping us off for weekend camping and fishing trips on the Yarra at Yarra Glen. Roach and redfin were still our major quarry but we dreamed of catching the trout that were reputed to reside there.

Then came a pivotal moment in both our lives. A mutual school friend, Stephen Millard, had a book by some fellow called David Scholes, called *The Way of an Angler*, and a cane fly rod - a Victoria made by Turvilles. John immediately grasped the significance of this and soon had equipped himself with a Victoria, a Hardy Perfect reel, a silk line and a handful of Red Tags. He convinced me that this was the way of the future, and had us out on the road one Saturday morning hitchhiking up to the beautiful King Parrot Creek.

Remember, this was our first time casting with a fly rod on a stream; it was learning on the job. We wet-waded up the stream, taking it in turns with the one rod, literally flogging the water to foam. We came eventually to a large pool on a bend in the stream, overhung with beautiful native vegetation through which dappled sunshine fell onto the pool's smooth surface.



Two VFFA legends – Marty Rogers and John Philbrick. Sadly both are no longer with us.

There towards the head of the pool in a shaft of sunlight, seemingly suspended in the air so clear was the water, gently finning from side to side and occasionally delicately sipping some morsel from the surface was the object of our desire: a beautiful, golden-hued, vermilion spotted brown trout. I had the rod in my hands and it was my turn to cast, but John used all his nascent lawyerly skills to try to convince me otherwise. I prevailed and somehow, as if pre-ordained, managed to put the fly lightly above the fish. John and I watched in rapt concentration, and then disbelief, as the Red Tag bobbed down with the current and into the waiting mouth of the trout. Somehow I hooked it, and we landed the fish.

It was unimportant who caught that fish, because in reality that fish caught both of us. I firmly believe that the angling purity of that catch, the full vision of the whole process, led John to seek to replicate this act throughout his life. Don't get me wrong, John could fish blind with the best of them, but he was most happy when sight fishing and would actively seek fishing that suited this method.

This obsession was further fed by our discovery together of the Monaro with its hatch-driven visual fishing. I remember our first trip, John picking me up in his Volkswagon Beetle late one night in the late 1960s, a seven hour horror drive, and me waking up at dawn when he finally stopped, to a barren moonscape (Monaro was in one of its periodic droughts) beside the Maclaughlin River. It was so unlike anything either of us had experienced and I remember berating John for taking me there.

John, however, retained his optimism which was totally vindicated by us landing 28 trout up to 3lb 5oz over two days. John continued his love affair with the Monaro into the 1980s, until finally he became disillusioned with the frequency of the droughts and their effect on the fishing and turned more attention to Tasmania.

About this time a group of Victorian anglers had commenced camping on Penstock Lagoon around Christmas time each year. Traditional fishing there was casting to rising fish during a hatch, or in the often long gap between hatches, hanging a dry fly out in the ripple and waiting for a fish to come along, or blind searching with a wet fly.

John though, was not content with the passivity of this, and uniquely applied the knowledge acquired over the years to develop and popularise a technique that ironically had first been postulated by David Scholes in *"The Way of an Angler"*, the little book lent to him all those years earlier by Stephen Millard. And so John was largely responsible for the development of the proactive fishing method now known as wade polaroiding, which in my humble opinion transformed lake fishing in Tasmania.

Vale John Philbrick

... John Pilkington

Whilst many of us are familiar with the skills and stories of John's exploits on our rivers and streams there was another side to him that is worth recounting.

He came to the Victorian Bar in 1975 after graduating in law at Melbourne University in 1972. He soon became known to his friends and colleagues as "Fearless". As with his angling, he was meticulous in his preparation of cases and demonstrated outstanding skills in Court. His intellect, legal ability, flair for language and innate sense of fairness shone through, especially when addressing juries.

He had a word perfect memory for the evidence, which was known to be intimidating to opponents who did not



John loved his bone fishing

share his perfect recall. His was a substantial and successful common law practice specialising in personal injuries cases. He took silk in 2007.

>>>

Between 2010 - 2012 John took leave before returning to the Bar where he practised until 2016.

His svelte figure at University and his athletic and other prowesses enabled him to be crowned 'Mr University', the title earned by excellence in, amongst other things, sculling warm beers and gobbling cold pies and then negotiating a tank of water on a slippery pole. His exploits are legion and there is only space here to mention a few.

In the late 1970s upon returning to Chambers after a successful fishing trip to Tasmania with a suitcase full of large smoked trout, he put on a feast for his colleagues in his room. Much wine accompanied the meal. It was a hot December night just prior to the month-long Legal Vacation of January. Nobody thought to clean up after the party. By mid-January the pong was so bad that the whole building had to be evacuated!

Another time our hero was heading to a Gippsland Circuit Court in his trusty Celica. Heavy rain had flooded a creek but he thought he would risk it. He didn't make it and sadly the numerous briefs that he had on the back seat of the car floated away downstream. He had a difficult task requiring all his persuasive powers to explain that to his instructing solicitor.

He was a truly Rumpolian character in his manner and later his shape but to his great credit he worked at his fitness.

His loss was a great shock and sadness to all his legal friends.



John was a rugged individualist and keen fly fisher even in his younger days

New Members

This month we again have the pleasure of welcoming three new members to the Association. Brad Wilson, Todd Allen and William Davidson have all joined our ranks. We welcome them warmly and trust that their membership brings many years of friendship, pleasure and wonderful memories.

President's Casting Day

... by Dermot O'Brien

Attendees this year were greeted with a beautiful mild and windless Sunday morning at the Red Tag pool. It really was exceptional. Twenty VFFA stalwarts turned up to continue the tradition.

The fact that only a handful bothered to cast did not put a dampener on proceedings. Praise for Tamie Fraser, the guest speaker at the Annual Dinner, was effusive, and obviously a great night had been had by all.

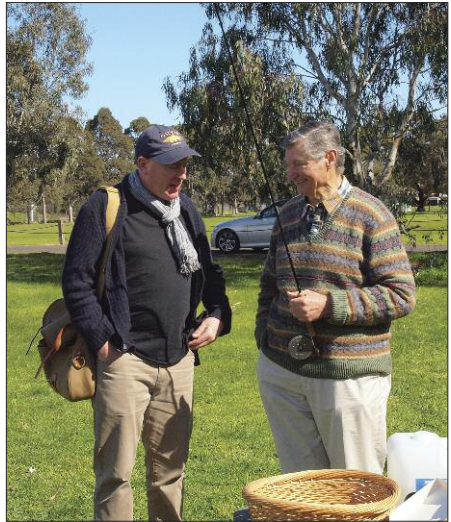
There were some sombre and reflective moments as word of the sudden passing of long-time VFFA member John Philbrick continued to spread. John Pilkington and Brian Rolfe knew him from university days and were able to give an insight into John Philbrick going back to those days.

President Chris Gray was barbecue master and there was no shortage of hot coffee, tea, sausages and hamburger patties. Thanks Chris.

As the morning rolled on cigar chomping Mike Crewes pulled out his beautiful Winston rod and as he cast it glistened in the morning sun. Robert Tuck unsheathed a Hardy Smuggler, a rod he plans to use on small streams this season. Hamish Hughes, David Grisold, Hubert Reichelt and Rick Dugina all enjoyed the casting morning.

It was good to see Colin Morrison and Bruce Whitehead there, enjoying catching up with old friends.

Sunday, September 22, is the next casting morning.



Bernard Holbery and Hubert Reichelt sharing some ideas



David Hooke and Mike Crewes enjoyed some casting practice

VFFA Extends Columbia Range



&



The VFFA from September offers the full PFG range of Fishing clothing.

The extra range includes Polar Fleece Jackets, long and short pants, Rain Jacket and for all orders until 31st of December 2019 a Free VFFA Cap with included.



All Columbia Products are on display at VFFA General to try on for size, all products / sizes are available to try on to ensure proper fit. Refer to rear of brochure for ordering.

Payment can be made by credit cards or PayPal on the VFFA web site or direct deposit.

For ordering email, merchandise@vffa.org.au with size, colour and refer to the payment details on the brochure.

Tamie Fraser's Presentation at the Annual Dinner

Our Annual Dinner on August 23 was a wonderful event. Over 70 members and guests enjoyed the occasion, and this year's dinner saw a pleasing number of ladies in attendance. There was the traditional raffle with lots of fabulous prizes donated by our friends and supporters, and Pat Levy, from J.M. Gillies, donated a free Sage 1 rod to be auctioned. Hamish Hughes made the winning bid and now owns one of the best rods produced recently by the Sage company.

Of course the feature of the night was the speech by our special guest, Tamie Fraser AO. Here is the transcription of Tamie's presentation:

Thank you Terry for your kind introduction.

Well, here I am back with you tonight for the first time since you made me your first female member. I've now heard that you've got twelve female members, which is fantastic. I haven't been back before because I thought I would put a terrible damper on the jokes.

I think it was extremely brave of Terry to invite someone far beyond the acceptable age for public speaking to talk to you tonight, and very daunting for me to know that at least 90% of you here know more about the how and the where and the what of fishing in all its forms than do I. So I just want to share with you tonight my personal love for this very nice occupation. As Chris Hole describes it – 'heaven on a stick'.

The places one goes to fish are so very beautiful. Unspoiled horizons, and lakes and rivers which allow the luxury of perfect solitude. Even if the fish biting is a bit slow, we are surrounded by nature which restores our equilibrium and fills our contentment basket and gives us time to set the world to rights. Occasionally there is a moment when elements of fish, water, rock and landscape come together, and you catch your breath in recognition that that moment is your very own possession.

I learned to fish in Alaska where Malcolm and I went to fish a long time



Tamie Fraser speaking at our annual dinner

ago, when Alaska was still frontier country. A little float plane took us to fish for salmon, rainbow char and northern pike in heavenly picture-postcard country. We flew through valleys where there were Dall sheep and reindeer on the slopes of snow-capped mountains. The weather needed to be good so that the pilot could fly visually down the valleys, as the little plane couldn't fly high enough to get over the mountains.

I had a heap of good books to read and Malcolm fished. It was perfect lying there reading a good book and intimately watching the catching of fish. But the guide thought this was truly abysmal, and one day I finished my book early and he persuaded me to have a go. I threw the line into the water and >>>

immediately caught a fish. It was a grayling, which I think everyone says you could catch on a safety pin. But that didn't matter. I was hooked.

A fun place we later fished was Great Slave Lake in northern Canada. We flew in from Yellowknife with a dozen new guides in an aeroplane that was twice as old as the pilot. We stayed there for a week fishing for lake trout, which are a sort of char and which only grow one inch or two centimetres a year. Malcolm caught a trophy 39-incher, which was actually older than him.

After a week we flew out again, but with difficulty. The 'half as young as the plane' pilot had left the key on in the ignition, and the battery was flat. But these were outback people and had to be 'fixers'. A long rope was procured and put around the propeller. Twenty-five passengers (all the fishermen) pulled as hard as we could to jump-start the plane. The rope swivelled its way off and we all fell flat on our backs, and nothing happened to the engine. So a dilapidated Hi-Lux was procured and asked to do the job.

This was finally successful and we all climbed aboard. There were empty fuel drums to go back to Yellowknife and the smell of petrol was very strong inside the plane. After all the excitement of getting it started the Indian guides, who were also going back, thought they would have a cigarette. But with the smell of petrol making your eyes water this was not a good idea, and as the first match came out I ran up and down the centre of the plane hollering: "No!! No!! No!!" Anyway, we got home safely.

The ancient history of fishing is fascinating and too much to talk about here really, except to say that fishing was probably originally for food rather than for pleasure. I understand that the earliest known reference to fly fishing occurs in the writings of the Roman



Hubert Reichelt presented Tamie with a framed sketch of the Purple Haze fly drawn by Trevor Hawkins

historian Claudius Aelianus in the late second and third centuries.

He described how the Macedonians fishing in the Astraeus River noticed the fish were very partial to a large insect like a bumblebee. This could not be used as bait because the wings fell off. So the Macedonians wrapped the hook with scarlet wool to which they attached two feathers that grow beneath cock's wattles. I don't think we will go where a cock's wattle is. But they are the colour of wax producing a bee-like furry-bodied fly with wings.

This fly was used as a lure and apparently deceived the fish every time. One snippet I read suggested that someone who enjoyed fishing as a sport was Mark Antony, and according to Plutarch he paid the local fishermen to swim under his barge and put fish on his line to impress Cleopatra.

This reminded me of stories told at the end of the day's fishing, with a glass of wine, on the Central Highlands of Tasmania, where we did a lot of fishing. It's the scene of the Great Lake, Arthur's,



*The Purple Haze, as drawn by
Trevor Hawkins*

Penstock, Botsford, Bronte, and on and on. We were introduced to this area by Michael Youl, Ross Johnson and Jimmy Allen, and in all sorts of weather we fell in love with it.

Originally three or four of us would meet for coffee and decide where to go. And then we would fish three or four lakes a day, walking for miles. And we always managed to catch fish. Then came the boats, and everyone got fat and didn't walk anywhere. We probably caught fish as well, but we didn't do nearly as many lakes and it wasn't nearly as much fun I didn't think.

Malcolm used to park me to be quiet on an island or on the shore somewhere miles and miles away. We would try to communicate but it was quite difficult. He asked me what I'd done with something, and I tried to tell him. But he kept calling out, "I can't hear you. I can't hear you!" So I said, "Well, look at me." Then I touched my left eye and my wader trousers, indicating to him that I'd left it in the toolbox.

To finish I would like to read you an essay written by a child of 12 which seems to me to encompass what we all feel about fly fishing:

"The Goodradigbee is a river you might all know up somewhere near Canberra. The Goodradigbee is a very peaceful river. It can get very shallow in summer but there are pools and other places deep enough to catch fish. Trout. Rapids are occasional and quite fast. Near the rapids are little beaches, but there is no sand. Just beautiful warm smooth rocks sloping gracefully down to the water's edge.

There is a huge canopy of trees on the other side of the river. And on this side, but the land is partly cleared here. There is enough sun and dappled shade for it to be a small paradise.

So I can see why he chose this haven to fish. I watched fascinated as he cast his rod so easily with an expert little flick of the hand, the line moving and twisting so perfectly. The fly, the Red Tag he has on now, lands so lightly and sits on the water. The fisherman's eyes never shift their gaze.

He wears a camouflage hat and shirt with sleeves rolled up to the elbows, revealing brown tanned arms that have seen days in the sun. He is up to his ankles in water, the felt-bottomed boots helping to keep his grip.

A fish rises, twice, the second time very close to the fly. It rises again and it eats the fly. The fisherman strikes and starts reeling in the line, but the fish takes off. The fisherman decreases the tension, but only slightly. And the fish pauses. Taking a chance the fisherman begins reeling in the line, but again the fish takes off. But he's getting weaker now. The fisherman continues reeling in the line until this 5 lb trout is netted.

I gaze in admiration at this man, my dad."

Thank you very much.



Upcoming Events:

Members have already been reminded of several important events occurring over the next few months. By the time this newsletter is completed and distributed the new trout season will have opened on September 7. On Sunday, September 15, there is an opportunity to visit the Snobs Creek Hatchery and this is an exciting place to visit. Among many other features at the hatchery there is the opportunity to see pools with brood fish cruising round. Some of these browns and rainbows are so large it's almost dangerous to stand close. Some years ago there was a brown cruising these pools that was 17 lb.



An aerial photo of the Snobs Creek Hatchery

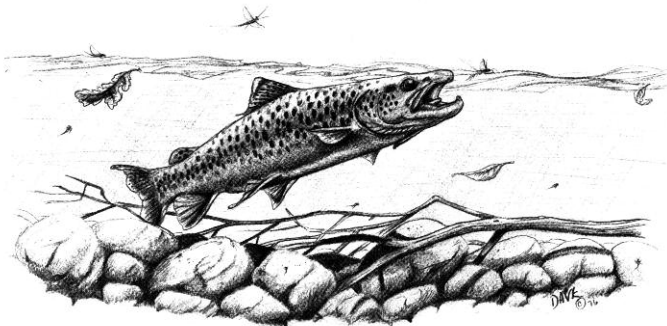
Sunday casting resumes again on September 22; this one being organised by Gordon Baker.

In October we have the annual trip to Thorpdale where we go as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishing Club. They have stocked browns and rainbows into a number of dams on local farms and the Latrobe Valley members will be our guides, as well as providing a magnificent barbecue lunch for the visitors. If you haven't been before then this really is a highly recommended day out.

In November we have the second opportunity to visit Millbrook Lakes, and at this time of the year these fabulous lakes will provide some fabulous fishing. Watch out for the advertisement calling for participants.

On November 23 the 2019 Wild Trout Conference is being held at Mansfield and a number of our members will be attending this event, as well as enjoying some trout fishing there in some of the best trout streams in our state.

On the same weekend the annual trip to Warrnambool has been scheduled and the NOE for this important and very enjoyable annual trip is given on the next page.



VFFA Notice of Major Event – Warrnambool Trip

November 22 - 24, 2019

The Event: Weekend visit to Warrnambool to be hosted and guided by the Warrnambool Fly Fishers Club.

Event date: Check in Friday, November 22, and check out Sunday morning November 24.

Travel: You are responsible for making your own arrangements to and from Warrnambool

Cost/s: TBA, accommodation based on the number sharing cabin.

Saturday night dinner to be hosted by Warrnambool Fly Fishers' Club at Napa Merri Vineyard.

Event location & address: Accommodation is confirmed at the Surfside Caravan Park

Accommodation: Shared Cabin

Sleeping requirements: Bring own bedding and towel

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Self catering Friday night, though the group usually meets for a meal at "Bojangles" Restaurant in Liebig Street, Warrnambool

Dinner Saturday night will be hosted by The Warrnambool Fly Fishers at Tricia and Jim Blakeslee's beautiful Napa Merri Winery, 112 Bridge Road, Woodford

BYO drinks, attendees will cover the costs for this great evening.

Description of fishing areas: Warrnambool Fly Fishing Club members will each guide two VFFA members on Saturday, November 23. We will fish a number of local rivers which may include the Merri, Hopkins, Mt Emu, and the Moyne.

These rivers offer a wonderful variety of fishing, both wet and dry styles, depending on the height and clarity of the water.

Mobile phone coverage: Most areas.

How physically challenging: Comfortable fishing most areas.

Fishing license required: Yes, if applicable.

Strongly recommended personal equipment: waders/wading boots, gaiters if wet wading, brimmed hat, glasses/sunglasses, sunscreen, wet weather gear, warm clothes, wading staff, UHF/VHF radio, torch at dusk onwards, mobile phone, water, lunch.

Essential equipment when fishing out of sight of other participants: UHF radio

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to Event Co-ordinator by Wednesday November 13, 2019. Obtain ERF from www.vffa.org.au or pick up one at a General Meeting.

Event Co-coordinator : Hughie Maltby - Mob 0423 283 079,
or Email – redhtag@hotmail.com

Date of this Notice of Event: September 2, 2019

Millbrook Lakes Visit

Our first visit to Millbrook Lakes, under our new arrangement with owner/manager Mark Weigall, was on Tuesday, August 27. We had a full contingent of 12 starters and they were very keen to go. The plan was to meet at the Gordon Hotel at 8:45 am. I arrived there with Dermot at 8:30, and it was obvious we were among the last to arrive. A few were already shuffling around trying to squeeze into waders.

Our guide for the day, Jim Jackman, arrived soon after and gave us an initial briefing. Then the long caravan of cars and SUVs trailed Jim down the road, through the gate, and around to the cabin on the lake where we parked. Our initial reaction? The area surrounding the lakes we were to fish was scenically gorgeous. The lakes and their surrounds were really pretty. And it was cold. (But then we were in the Ballarat area at the end of winter.)

Jim offered a few more suggestions and some helpful advice, and then out came the waders, rods, beanies, fluffy coats, flies, rods, reels, polaroids ... Soon we were spreading in all directions. Jim gave a casting lesson to some who were keen for some help with their delivery, but most of us were already creeping around the edges trying to connect with a Millbrook trout. Jim had told us that the not so large lake with the cabin, where most of us were fishing, had recently been stocked with an additional 900 fish. How could we go wrong?

Jon Kenfield was the first to connect, and your editor, for once, followed soon after with a 3 lb rainbow that thought his Magoo was edible. Kossy scored next, then Rick Dugina caught the largest fish of the day – a solid brown that flashed at his wet fly and got hooked under the chin. But they still count. All the fish were



*Dermot O'Brien tackling up.
This rod will do.*

carefully returned to the water.

The sun came out and the day warmed up. Not much breeze. It was a truly fabulous day to be fishing. Unfortunately, the trout became somewhat less cooperative, though people hooked and lost fish, and everyone saw fish moving, rising, or splashing at some stage or other. Jim explained that because the air and water temperatures were so low there were few insects around and hence the fish were mostly fossicking around for snails and other edible items down in the depths.

Late in the afternoon Mark Weigall called in. He spotted the squadrons of midges flitting around and suggested there was a good chance of a late midge hatch. As the afternoon wore on I hiked up to the adjacent lake with the island in the middle and the super clear water. Jim arrived and I was given a very helpful lesson on catching midge feeders. The evening arrived and some seven or eight fish started rising frequently but randomly. And they kept at it, but were so very discerning. Despite Jim's continuing advice they all avoided my midge. According to Jim it was all rather tame as midge sessions go – perhaps a bare 2 out of 10. Dermot arrived with the



Kossy connected early with a nice rainbow



A smiling John Kenfield

transport and we packed up and headed for home via Maccas for some sustenance. (My first quarter-pounder in years!)

Despite the fact that the fish count was less than we'd hoped the consensus was that it had been a fabulous day, and immensely enjoyable.

Our next Millbrook visit is scheduled for Wednesday, November 20, and I suspect that the numbers will fill very quickly.



Rick Dugina caught this splendid brown

Some Protection at last for our precious Steavenson River

... Dermot O'Brien

"This historic stream was a darling of many of Australia's founding fly fishers." Those were the words of Phil Weigall in his book *Fly Waters Victoria & Snowy Mountains*, first published in 2003.

This beautiful little stream close to Melbourne is known to many VFFA members. Despite its size and proximity to Melbourne the Steavenson absorbs tremendous fishing pressure. It is a delightful stream in an area surrounded by other wonderful little fly waters, like the Rubicon, the Acheron, Little River and others. And of course it is not far from the mighty Goulburn.

However, in the past 12 months one stretch of the Steavo has been under attack. Illegal works have been carried out without the permission of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) and therefore the appropriate permits. Significant stream and streamside damage has been done on private property.

The VFFA was among the first to raise the alarm and provide documented evidence to the GBCMA. On August 15 a man appeared in the Seymour Magistrates Court and pleaded guilty to eight charges involving the Steavenson. The VFFA is aware of the man's identity and believes nothing is served by naming him in this article. Council member Dermot O'Brien has been aware of the damage from day one and what follows is the press release send out by the GBCMA. It says it all.

To quote from the press report:
"In August this year A 60-year-old Buxton man was ordered to pay a total of \$7,500 and placed under a good behaviour bond after he illegally cleared Crown land beside the Steavenson River near Buxton. The Seymour Magistrates Court heard the man was caught using an excavator to

clear crown land between the property where he was working and the river.

The court heard the defendant was seen by officers from the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GB CMA) stockpiling 14 large heaps of timber logs and stumps. The man also admitted to digging a deep trench 10 to 15 metres from the water's edge.

Magistrate Stella Stuthridge ordered the defendant to pay \$5,000 in costs to the GB CMA and to donate \$2,500 to a drought charity. He was also placed on a 12-month good behaviour bond after pleading guilty to eight charges. The defendant was caught red-handed by the GB CMA after information was passed on from an angler on the river."

GBCMA CEO Chris Norman said he was pleased with the outcome and hoped it would serve as a reminder to landholders to make sure they get the correct permits and licences before undertaking works near waterways.

"This action proves we are prepared to go after individuals who do the wrong thing," Mr Norman said. "This is just the first step. The defendant now has to set about repairing the significant damage he's caused."



Some of the damage done to the glorious little Steavenson River

Montana's Small Stream Magic

... by Alan Pilkington

Montana is famous for its trout streams, especially in the south west of the state. The Madison, Gallatin, Yellowstone, Blackfoot, Big Hole, Clark Fork and Big Horn rivers all evoke images of big trout in big water, encased in majestic western landscapes of high valleys, forests and canyons amid the peaks of the Rocky Mountains. Perhaps the most influential fly fishing book of the twentieth century, *A River Runs Through It*, was set squarely in the heart of these rivers on the banks of the Blackfoot. Montana is home to more Blue Ribbon rivers than any other U.S. state.

Like all large rivers, these depend on flows from smaller ones; in fact there are probably upwards of thirty or so smaller rivers feeding them, as well as hundreds of creeks. These smaller waters invariably rise at higher altitudes and often are important fish nurseries; what's more, as they are off the beaten track they attract fewer anglers and in most cases don't have float fishing like many of their parent streams. And some of these smaller streams have become famous with fly fishermen in their own right; Rock Creek, a tributary of the Clark Fork is a Blue Ribbon trout stream on most trout bums' bucket lists.

My brother John and I had talked about fishing some of these streams - their dimension appealed to us as well as their lack of traffic. We are small mountain stream anglers, having been weaned on the Big River in Victoria, so we set sail in mid-July 2019 to check them out. We rented a rebuilt VW Westphalia (bigger engine, raised suspension, bigger wheels) in Seattle, where I live, with four smaller Montana streams in mind - Fish Creek, the west fork of the Bitterroot River, the Wise River and Rock Creek. These are



John Pilkington relaxing in bear country, Montana

more or less in a circle around Missoula, Montana, no more than a hundred miles from each other, and all between 5,000 and 6,000 ft altitude.

We figured if the fishing didn't measure up or the weather was bad, we could simply move on to the next. With the Westphalia we could camp anywhere, and we had two weeks to do nothing but explore and fish.

Fish Creek was the closest to Seattle - a ten hour drive across central Washington and Idaho's panhandle - and a tributary of the Clark Fork, Montana's biggest river. Like all the streams on our list, it holds native cutthroat, rainbow, and a hybrid of the two ('cuttbow'), brown and brook trout as well as bull trout. The last, a close relative of the brook trout and a member of the char family of salmonids, is native to a few Montana rivers, as are arctic grayling, which we encountered later on the Wise River. In all the rivers we fished we also caught mountain whitefish, a salmonid common in western streams.

A feature everywhere of this trip were the campgrounds, maintained by the United States Forest Service, even in the more remote reaches of these smaller streams. These consist of designated spaces >>>



One of several fine trout caught by John and Alan

with fire pits and tables with bench seats and usually some toilet facility. The U.S. national park and forest management system is a great model. On Fish Creek we found a private, unoccupied camping space with only two other occupied ones in a space that could accommodate ten, five miles upstream from the Clark Fork. It was right by the creek, more a river than a creek by Australian standards, perhaps the size of the Big River in early summer, and surrounded by conifers and willows. Near our camp was a ponderosa pine, said to be the tallest in that part of the state, about 60 meters high.

John opened his account next morning with some nice cutthroats, as did I. The fish on these streams are smaller than on the bigger rivers; 18" and two pounds is a big one. In general we caught fish around 12", occasionally up to 15" - good fun on #4 weight rods and small dry flies. The fish were healthy, strong and colorful, and came eagerly to a fly fished on top.

From Fish Creek we moved down the Bitterroot Valley, south of Missoula, on part of the Lewis and Clark Trail. Clark had come down this valley in 1806 when he and his party split with Lewis on their return journey east. Lewis headed towards the Marias River before they rejoined on the Yellowstone River two hundred miles to the east. John had been

reading Stephen Ambrose's masterful account of their expedition, *Undaunted Courage*, and was checking landmarks as we drove south.

The Bitterroot rises in the mountain range that carries its name, and is a fine stream famous for its skwala hatch. This is a mid-sized stonefly that emerges prolifically late spring and early summer. The river forks sixty miles from its confluence with the Clark Fork, and eighteen miles up its west branch we found a comfortable campsite by the stream, under lodge pole pines.

This is a popular fly fishing spot in mid-summer, and several others were in the campground, but not enough to disturb the quality of the fishing or our privacy. Again, we enjoyed two days of good fishing for cutthroats, browns and rainbows; as on Fish Creek and the later streams we fished, once the sun hit the water the fish went down and stayed there till the waters were again in shadows and insects started emerging.

We started casting the Purple Haze, basically a Parachute Adams with a purple body, created by Andy Carlson on the Bitterroot River about fifteen years ago. It is a good mayfly imitation as well as an attractor pattern, and soon we were both watching it live up to its reputation



John casting over some very productive water

on cutthroat, rainbows and browns on both moving and slower water. Also effective through this trip in different sizes were Elk Hair Caddis (evenings), Ausable Wulff (my favourite all round dry fly), Yellow Sally (a small stone fly), and a Mahogany Quill.

In good weather, after two days on the Bitterroot's west branch, we headed for the Wise River, across Chief Joseph Pass and east into the broad valley of the Big Hole River. Rising as a small meadow stream from the Anaconda Range, the Big Hole grows to a mid-sized river (by western standards), and its principal tributary is the Wise River, about fifty miles downstream from the Big Hole's source. This river is smaller than the previous two, mostly fast moving water with rocks, pockets, and occasional pools, each of which hold fish, mostly smaller brook trout or cutthroats, all eager when the sun was off the water. The biggest fish I took was a 15" inch whitefish; it rose to a fly on top and fooled me into thinking it was a nice brown until it reached the net. It was an interesting fish to encounter nonetheless, thriving in its natural habitat.

We made a lovely camp off a track that led to the rear of a ranch – no traffic, no sounds other than from the river, birds and the wind through the lodge pole

pinus. John braised a big lamb shank in a camp oven; we felt as though we were in a fly fishing camp back home but for the conifers and the deer that sometimes wandered by our camp. There were lots of smaller fish here, especially brookies.

Our final foray was to the fabled Rock Creek, on a circuitous route that took us through the old copper mining town of Anaconda. Rising in the Sapphire Range, Rock Creek flows north until it meets the Clark Fork about thirty miles east of Missoula. There are approximately fifty miles of fishable water, bordered by an unsealed road with occasional pullouts and camping sites. We chose the upper section – slightly smaller water and less popular than downstream - and found a roadside camp with only one other nearby, right beside the river. Despite its name, this is a river, the biggest of the four we fished – it's perhaps twice the size of the Mitta in early summer.

In the only bad weather of our trip, rain had raised the river the day before and the water was slightly discoloured. It was barely wadeable for two old timers, but St. Hubert smiled on us! John noticed a small stream entering it just above our camp which looked inviting; within a few casts, he showed it to be loaded with good-sized fish; he took ten, including two fat browns measured at 16". >>>



Just a small section of some magnificent water in Montana

We were not sure whether these fish were sheltering from the higher water in the main stream, but it was great fun while it lasted.

As the river's level dropped and cleared the fishing improved; by our third and last day we saw why Rock Creek enjoys the reputation it does. John took ten fish again on the second day, and I had similar luck, including a 17" cutthroat. It fell for a #16 Ausable Wulf, and was a strong, colourful, broad shouldered fish that was about as big as cutthroats get on Rock Creek. On our last night, fishing a soft corner at the top of a run near camp, John rose four fish in fifteen minutes on a tan elk hair caddis, including a big cutthroat that broke him off when it reached stronger water as I stood nearby, hapless, net in hand. Each evening after sunset there were prolific hatches up and down the river – mayflies of different sizes from #20 to #12, varieties of caddis and some smaller stoneflies.

This was a great trip; brothers sharing time together on new and different water off the beaten track. A bald eagle's nest near our Rock Creek camp held two eaglets, and the parents soared above us as we fished; white tailed deer in their red summer coats walked by our camp's fringe at early morning, and above us was an old but still healthy ponderosa pine whose base circumference we measured at six meters.

To salute us, as we left for home on an early morning with mist on the water, a bull moose wandered across the river. Everywhere there were summer wildflowers, including the beautiful red and orange Indian Paintbrush, which thrives on moist ground at streamside. There was not a day we didn't each catch fish; smaller, yes, but every bit as much fun as if they were bigger fish from Montana's better known rivers.



Christmas Island - in July 2019

It's 7°C, raining and blowing a gale outside the house here in Warrnambool as I sit by the fire with my laptop and reminisce about the seven days with my friend Zoran and I spent chasing bonefish and triggers at Christmas Island (Kiritimati) in the last week of July.

What a great time we had. We sure caught a lot of bonefish – no trophies but mostly in the 3 to 5 lb range. We even got onto some big schools holding in the current in channels where we would see them all turn, follow and compete with each other to grab the fly. And then there were the triggers that were sometimes frustratingly finicky and at other times so willing to take. We landed a lot of blue-spot and golden trevally. And how many big GT's did we see zoom past that refused to take our flies? How long until the next time we can have a go at them?

In the lead-up to this trip I had spent many evenings tying flies to replenish my



A good start to the week. Jim with a fine bone fish

saltwater fly boxes. So this year when I arrived at Ikari House, unpacked my bag, got my fishing gear ready and tucked the fly boxes into my vest they were crammed with Crabs, Crazy Charlies, rubber-legged Gotchas and Wabnitz Worms along with a few 2/0 bug-eyed Deceivers for GTs. >>>



Connected. Now the pressure is on both the gear and the angler.



I think the guide is indicating they've caught two fish already

It was my fourth trip there, so I had a pretty good idea which patterns and colour variations would get results. For example, I had tied a stack of short, sparse, pink, orange, silver-white or chartreuse Crazy Charlies on #6 stainless hooks. Many were lightly weighted with bead chain eyes. These I would cast to fish in relatively shallow water. The lighter weight versions of Charlie would land more gently, with less splash, and if cast well ahead of the target the fly was less likely to spook the fish. On my earlier trips, the pink and orange versions had been the most effective in the morning or on dull days, especially fished over coral rubble. White was good over light-coloured sand. With the sun high in the sky after lunch, chartreuse got more strikes when fished over a yellowish coloured bottom.

For deeper water, I tied these patterns on #4 hooks and used heavier nickel-plated lead or tungsten dumbbell eyes, instead of bead chain, to ensure the flies would sink straight to the bottom and be in “the

zone” where the bones hunt for their prey. For bonefish in very shallow water, ones that were skittish or moving very slowly, I had tied Wabnitz Worms. These I would cast well ahead of the fish and let sink. When a bonie would get near enough to see the fly I would give it one or two long pulls to get the fish’s attention. If the fish turned towards the fly I would then just let it sit, or maybe give the fly a single twitch and watch intently to see the take, then strip-strike and into him!

I had tied the Crabs and pearl rubber-legged Gotchas on #6 or #4 hooks with dumbbell eyes so they would sink straight to the bottom. I use them mainly on trigger fish. If I see one - head down, tail up, excavating for clams, crabs, shrimp or worms – I just can’t resist having a go at it. For triggers, the fly has to be cast up-current from the fish, allowed to sink to the bottom, then inched along to attract the trigger’s attention. Frequently, the fish will be spooked by the splash of the fly and it’s



They weren't all bonefish

gone. Other times the fish will see it, have a look, spook and then zoom off.

But sometimes, for whatever reason, they are on the bite. If I'm having one of those lucky days when I see a trigger intent on feeding, I stalk it and cast. If the fish sees the fly and is interested and it swims over and goes head-down onto it... if I see this, then I strip strike! If I feel the heavy weight of a big trigger shaking its head in disbelief on the other end of the line, then I hang on, only give it line grudgingly and hope the tippet doesn't break. If you cut it any slack the fish will dash straight to one of the volcano-like holes triggers



A smiling triggerfish

excavate in the reef, dive in, cut you off and it's all over within a few seconds. If you stop the trigger on that first run then you've got a good chance of landing it.

Now, lazing by the fire at home, I'm mentally making a list of the flies that worked the best this year, the ones that were chewed to bits and needed replacing, the ones that were lost when I was broken off by good fish. There is plenty of time. But sooner or later I will get back to it, tying flies and filling in the blank spots in my boxes. One thing's for sure - I need to tie a lot more Gotchas.



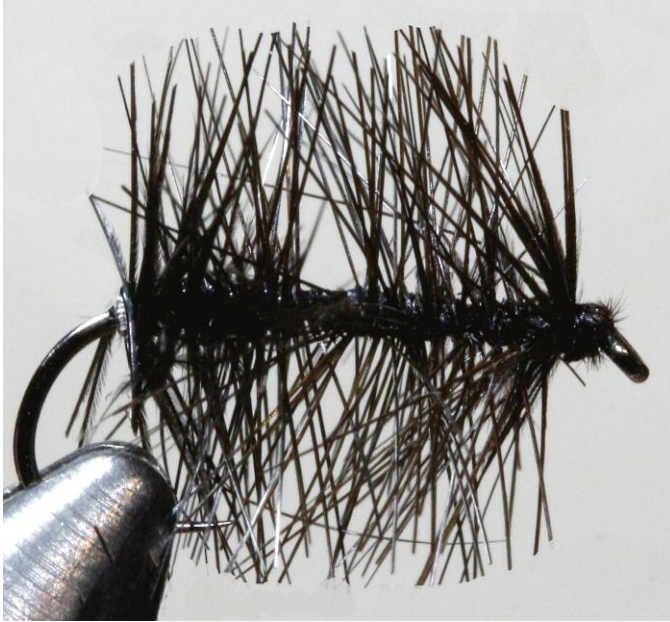
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FLY OF THE MONTH

Balling Midges



Mick's Full Stop

When the group of VFFA members visited Millbrook Lakes in August this year there was a smallish midge hatch happening just on dark. This got your editor interested in the flies to use during these hatches. My understanding is that by reputation trout are notoriously difficult to catch when there's a full-blown midge hatch on. But if they're rising then we'll be casting to them.

Jim Jackman, our guide at Millbrook, had obviously had plenty of experience fishing for trout in midge hatches. With his guidance I had set up my gear with a Milly Midge suspended about 20cm under a Balling Midge pattern. So what's a Balling Midge all about?

In Freshwater Fishing magazine issue 54 Mick Hall wrote an article on strategies and patterns for midge feeders. He describes the balling midge phenomenon. Apparently, part of the mating program for midges involves a number of males joining in a bonding session. In doing so they form a small ball, which in turn is very popular with the trout. And flies to represent balling midges are quite simple to tie.

The first of these is called a Balling Midge by Mick, and he says that this fly was shown to him in the mid-1960s by Russell Dodds of the Red Tag Fly Fishers, and was used very successfully by Russell in the early ('magic') days of Lake Eucumbene. Mick then describes the smaller but very common midges that appear on Melbourne's Yarra River on warm, still evenings. Mick's pattern to tempt these Yarra trout is called the Full Stop. It is smaller than the Balling Midge pattern, but essentially the same in construction. For both patterns the body is tightly wound and trimmed cock hackle feathers.

Then some years ago a neighbour of mine, Rod Lee, showed me his fly box for fishing the Tasmanian Highland Lakes. He had a very similar pattern for these balling midges, but his flies were tied with spun deer hair for the body.

Materials for the Balling Midge:

- Hook:** Kamasan B401 fine wire (dry fly) hook in sizes 12 and 14. (For the Full Stop pattern use dry fly hooks in sizes 18 or 20. For Rod's pattern for Tasmania perhaps sizes 14 or 16 would work).
- Thread:** Black 8/0.
- Body:** Grizzle cock hackle. (For the Full Stop use black cock hackle, and for Rod's pattern find some dark deer hair.)

Tying the Fly

1. Put your hook in the vice and run the thread from just behind the eye down to the end of the shank and then back again.
2. Take a stiff cock hackle (grizzle or black – depending on which fly you are tying), prepare it by stripping away the fibres at the base. Leave about 4 mm of stalk free of fibres and tie this length of clear stalk along the shank so that the hackle feather sticks out past the bend of the hook.
3. Tie this clear stalk in by winding the thread back along the shank to just behind the eye.
4. Now wind the hackle in tight turns along the shank towards the eye, thus building up the body.
5. Trim off the waste hackle feather and use a few more turns of thread to make the hackle secure, then cut the thread.
6. Now take your scissors and clip the hackle feathers all round to make a neat fat oval-shaped fly.
7. In the case of Rod's midge ball you will need to tie in some fine deer hair along the shank, spinning the deer as you would when tying a Muddler Minnow or grasshopper head. Then again trim the deer hair at the end to produce the oval ball.

VFFA 2019 meetings & other activities

September

- 7 Saturday Opening of the new trout season for rivers in Victoria
15 Sunday Visit to Snobs Creek Hatchery
19 Thursday VFFA Annual General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club
22 Sunday Sunday Casting – 10:00 am at the Red Tag Casting Pool
30 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

October

- 6 Saturday VFFA annual visit to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley Club's stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers
17 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Chris Wisniewski, from Tasmania's Inland Fisheries Service
28 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

November

- 20 Wednesday VFFA Members Fishing Day at Millbrook Lakes (Booking Essential)
21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker – Cameron McGregor, from River Escapes (fly fishing for Murray cod)
22 – 24 Annual trip to Warrnambool
23 Saturday 2019 Talk Wild Trout Conference at Mansfield
25 Monday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm

December

- 12 Thursday Annual Christmas Dinner with guest speaker David Grisold (VFFA past president and life member)

January 2020

- 15 Wednesday VFFA Members Fishing Day at Millbrook Lakes (Booking Essential)

February 2020

- 3 Monday First Council Meeting for 2020 – 6:30 pm
15 – 23 Tasmania trip to Hayes on Brumby's
Event Co-ordinator – Hugh Maltby
27 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM at the Kelvin Club:
"Liars' Night" – reports from members on their summer fishing