

FLY LINES



SEPTEMBER 2021

The September AGM

The notice papers required for the AGM were sent out in the July and August newsletters, these being the Nomination Form, Appointment of Proxy Form, and Meeting Agenda.

Unfortunately again a scheduled VFFA meeting cannot be held at the Kelvin Club because of Covid restrictions, so this year's AGM will be Zoom presentation. Details are as follows:

Topic: VFFA Annual General Meeting

Time: September 16, 2021, 08:00 PM
Australia/Melbourne

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://bit.ly/3jg8eUo>

Meeting ID: 881 0239 5490;

Passcode: 452713

One clear advantage of Zoom meetings is that members who can't attend our regular meetings at the Kelvin Club because of distance or other reasons can log in from home and participate in the Zoom meeting.

This year's AGM will see the retirement of some prominent councillors who have made significant contributions to the VFFA over many years. These

Thursday, September 16,
8:00 and a
Zoom Meeting

contributions need to be acknowledged. Fortunately, it is good to report that other capable members have stepped forward to fill the vacancies.

We will have a new president, a new secretary, and a new librarian, so there are some significant changes to the council this year.

All members are encouraged to join the Zoom meeting and be participants in this year's Annual General Meeting.



A Mark Weigall photo

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From Jim Blakeslee – despite the rain the upper Merri was clear enough to fly fish

President's Message

Welcome to another *Fly Lines* newsletter.

As I ponder the content of my final President's Report, the State Premier's announcements of a lengthening and tightening of covid restrictions makes it difficult for us to plan when we will be able to get together and enjoy the start to a new season on the streams. I cannot adequately express my gratitude for the support our VFFA community has engaged in via phone and Zoom calls in order to stay in touch with each other.

Upon reflection, my three years as president have been exciting, challenging, sad, and proud on many fronts in terms of what we have been able to achieve during my time at the helm. I have endeavoured to continue the legacy of previous presidents and councils in providing members with a variety of events, functions and relevant information to support our fly fishing pursuits.

My time as president has taken me to some fabulous places to fish. Some wonderful people have accompanied me and guided me on these jaunts, and I sincerely thank each of you for sharing with me your knowledge, patch of water, secrets and flies.

When not fishing, we have been able to bring together a broad array of guest speakers for our general meetings and other events. The calendar of events continues to grow and we have learnt to be flexible in moving dates to accommodate the lockdown rules.

The lockdowns have seen us resorting to Zoom and thus bring guest speakers to the comfort of your kitchens, lounge rooms and any other room you joined with us in the last 18 months. While



general meetings at the Kelvin Club draw in our regular cohort of members, Zoom has enabled us to broadcast to many of you who are unable to attend our monthly meetings in person.

Our new President, Dr David Hooke OAM, will be supported by some new council members and will lead the VFFA into its next chapter. It will be exciting to support David and the new team as they continue to offer members opportunities to be involved in the many events, trips, functions, and online Zooms in the months ahead.

The Annual General Meeting this month will be via Zoom. This newsletter issue has the details telling you how you can join with us as we thank the current council for its work and welcome in the new councillors. Nominations for the new council were plentiful, so our membership is well represented.

Our Annual dinner with Jim Allen OAM has been postponed until Friday, October 1. Jim has been very flexible and we hope to be back at the Kelvin Club to enjoy a night with him. We will follow up with the President's Casting Day at the Red Tag Pool in Fairfield on Sunday, October 3.

VFFA member Tony Stewart is our October guest speaker, and he will tell us about the fly fishing opportunities provided by the rivers in the Otway Ranges. Tony has some superb videos on his YouTube channel that will inspire anyone who has a passion for small stream fly fishing. Tony's presentation will be informative and entertaining as he focuses our attention on a unique patch of Victoria's Otway Ranges.

Fly tying has continued with a Zoom demonstration by Geoff Bloch on a Reverse Hackle Parachute Dun - an interesting and successful tie by Geoff. Andrew Mossman will be leading a session as our instructor in September. When we run these fly tying sessions on Zoom we record them, and members can access the recordings by contacting the president via email president@vffa.com.au. We will then send you the link.

With the opening of the Victorian trout season at the beginning of September I do hope you will be able to enjoy getting out on a stream soon. It should be a great season as we have had 18 months of limited access to rivers, and with the weather playing its part with some cooler and wetter months, hopefully this has resulted in two years of productive spawning runs.

Our calendar of events will continue where possible both indoors and outdoors, and I hope we'll be able to enjoy a BBQ together to see in the new season late in September. There will hopefully be a Donger weekend in Spring, a nymph technique day run by Rick and Jo Dobson, a streamcraft day by David Grisold, and the Millbrook days as well.

The Victorian Government's plan to allow fishing and camping on Crown Land that has grazing licences and river frontage has been in the news frequently. It is still

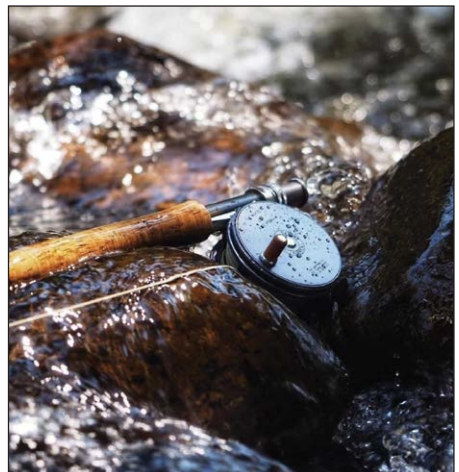
unclear as to what camping and fishing will be available, how it will be managed, and how it will impact the management of farming biosecurity and indigenous cultural heritage. This has and will cause a divide amongst some farmers and fishers and campers. Some farmers have already erected signage indicating the public is not welcome on their land.

We encourage members to show courtesy and where possible request access from the land holder/owner/manager. This will put you in the best position to enjoy a day on a river. We await the formal outcome of the changes which is due on September 1, and will provide an update in the October newsletter.

Thank you to the many members and friends who have supported me during my time as president. It has been a privilege.

I wish you well. Please reach out to a fellow fly fisher and have a chat.

Chris



From Bernard Holbery – the essentials

Vale – Les Robertson (13/11/1942 – 15/5/2021)

It is sad to report that another of our longtime members has died.

Les Robertson, who joined the VFFA in 1970 and was thus a member for 51 years, passed away on May 15.

Les had been a very keen angler all his life and took up fly fishing for trout in his early twenties. He fished the Goulburn in those days and recalls knowing and meeting with Bob Roles and Jim Allen at Thornton. Les also fished Eucumbene in its best years.

Les grew up in the western suburbs of Melbourne and attended Brunswick Technical School. He qualified as a boiler maker/welder and worked in this area until he retired in 2008.

In 1965 he met Joan. They were married in 1967 and moved to Bundeera. Their daughter Suzanne was born in 1973 and their son Glenn in 1976.

Joan tells us that Les was already a very keen and competent fly fisher when they first met.

In his retirement years Les pursued his fly fishing passion, but tragically fell ill with Parkinson's Disease. Further medical complications followed, including developing Alzheimer's. He could no longer fish, so watched all the fishing shows he could find on television. When his health deteriorated further he moved into an aged care establishment.

Leslie Allan Robertson
'Les'



23 November 1942 ~ 15 May 2021

Joan reports that in recent years when the VFFA newsletter arrived in the mail she would take it with her when she visited Les and would read it to him from cover to cover. He loved it.

All VFFA members would wish Joan and the family our deep sympathies and condolences at this sad time.



From Bernard Holbery – challenging water

The October Meeting with Tony Stewart

Here is Tony's note on his planned presentation at our October meeting.

A love of photography and bush walking has long nurtured my appreciation of our natural environment, so when I started fly fishing, following a weekend introduction at Millbrook, it wasn't long before I was inspired to begin recording those trips into the bush in pictures and on video.

A number of trips to Tasmania's remote Central Plateau in pursuit of the fickle lake trout at least ensured that I was hooked on fly fishing!

I've been fortunate to have travelled regularly to Tasmania, the Snowy Mountains, New Zealand and even Chile to fulfil fly fishing ambitions. However the nearby Otway Ranges with its many creeks and small rivers has been an attraction since boyhood.

Over the past ten years or more I have made a particular effort to visit as many of these streams as possible in each season and to come to understand the



Rainforest gullies are a feature in the Otways

peculiarities of these discreet waterways. Participation in the sport of rogaining has given me the skills and confidence to seek out the more remote gorges and headwaters of the major Otway streams.

Catching resident brown trout on hand-tied flies while also capturing these exploits in picture and on video has been a challenge I have enjoyed now for many years. I carry a considerable amount of equipment in addition to basic fly fishing gear. Several cameras, a tripod, and navigation and emergency contact equipment are all part of my day out in the Otways.

I make no claim to any particular fly fishing expertise other than an area-specific knowledge based on observations over many seasons. I look forward to sharing this information about six of the major rivers in the system through pictures and video clip highlights over a 'Season in The Otways' during my presentation in October.

Tony Stewart



The Aire River

Millbrook Ventures

The VFFA has four Millbrook Lakes visits scheduled each year, and many of our members have now enjoyed this experience. The lakes we fish are very attractive and well-stocked, and our past visits have been thoroughly enjoyable. We are very grateful to Mark Weigall for arranging this opportunity for us.

The dates for our current season's visits are September 8, November 17, January 12 (2022 - subject to no extreme weather), and March 9 (2022).

The popularity of these visits was amply demonstrated when Terry Rogers advertised the recent September visit. All available places were filled by applicants as soon as his email advertising the invitation was sent out.

Unfortunately, this September visit had to be cancelled because of Covid restrictions. Let's hope that the November visit can still go ahead.

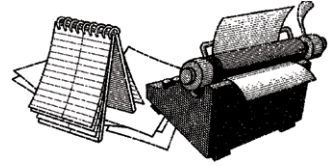


Daniel Lovecek was particularly successful at an earlier Millbrook visit, catching a number of fish on a brown nymph



We're hoping for a change of luck to allow the November Millbrook trip to proceed; the lockdown saw the September visit cancelled

From the EDITOR'S DESK



"Work on your casting, even if you've been fishing for decades. Very few fly fishers cast well enough, and no one can cast too well. Fresh and saltwater guides universally agree that if they could magically impart one skill to their clients, they would give them the ability to throw the line. Take some lessons, study good casting books, and practice what you learn. Better fishing depends mostly on better casting."

"Second, use your feet. We've all heard that 10% of the anglers catch 90% of the fish. I don't know if that's true, but I've noticed that 90% of the anglers seem to occupy the 10% of the water nearest the parking areas. Let other guys jostle for space under the bridge. You will find a better experience if you follow the path upstream or downstream until it becomes faint and narrow, and then press on for another quarter of a mile. It's astonishing how many anglers simply refuse to walk more than a few hundred yards. So hoof it. At worst, you'll get some exercise." (Some advice from Art Scheck's very instructive book – Fly-fish Better)

"You can arrive in the wilderness these days and there is a TV blaring – there's a diesel generator in the camp. What happened to hotcakes over an open fire, and the satisfaction of catching trout that you have paid for with the aching muscles of a five-hour hike over rough country." (Clive Gammon: I Know A Good Place)

"Little creeks have a habit of grabbing you and holding your attention." (John Gierach)

In our last issue Jason Platts and Bernard Holbery told us how to fish the little creeks here in Victoria. And at our October meeting Tony Stewart will direct our attention to some other very fishable little creeks – the ones watering our Otway Ranges.

Sadly, I'm wondering today whether, or perhaps if, we'll ever get around this year to fishing any of these little creeks, or big ones, or even some lakes. We're enduring yet another covid lockdown. These are depressing times, and so very frustrating.

The lockdowns, or lockups, have done a fair bit of damage to our VFFA calendar. The August Annual Dinner, scheduled for August 20, was cancelled. Our guest speaker for this event, Jim Allen, has very kindly offered to speak at an attempted re-scheduled dinner on October 1, but who knows whether this will happen.

September 4 was the opening of our Victorian stream fishing for trout. Perhaps those living in country towns with nearby trout streams will be able to wet a line. (Does fly casting count as exercise?) But us Melbourne-based members don't have many streams within the 5 km limit.

The date for the Warrnambool Club's Annual Dinner (an event I thoroughly enjoy) was changed from July 31 to September 11, but this September date had to be cancelled, so Jim Blakeslee tells me they are hoping to find a Saturday in October or November for their twice re-scheduled dinner.

I was looking forward very much to being part of the VFFA visit to Millbrook Lakes on September 8, but that, too, had to be cancelled. We have a number of other events scheduled for September

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and October. Sadly, I suspect that most if not all of these will not happen.

The problem with these lockdowns (well, one of the many) is that they have been unpredictable, so planning is invariably precarious. If we knew well in advance when lockdowns were going to start and finish then we could plan around them. But as we know, the spread of this dreaded virus has been totally unpredictable. So planning has been a nightmare.

But having whinged for several paragraphs I have to say that while the lockdowns are a huge frustration, winding up in an ICU ward connected to a ventilator is an experience I am very anxious to avoid. (By the way, both Glenise and I have had our two jabs. They had better work!)

Our September meeting, the AGM, will be a Zoom meeting. Chris Gray will step down as president at this meeting. After he had completed his two years as president last year he was asked by the council to continue on for a third year. He did, and despite the incredible frustrations and difficulties created by Covid last year and again this year, he has done a fabulous job re-arranging events, negotiating with speakers, adjusting dates, and setting up Zoom meetings. Thus, at our last Council meeting a motion was passed and supported by all present acknowledging and thanking Chris for his leadership over these three years.

Here's a change of topic. We can't fish, so reading, watching YouTube videos, tying flies and sorting gear have helped fill the void. I received an email a few weeks ago from Ed Herbst. Ed is one of our valued VFFA friends living in South Africa. Although his fishing has been limited by health problems in recent years, he is well-recognised in South Africa as one of their very skilful and knowledgeable fly fishers.

Ed's email offered 'two useful vest items'.

The first is a clever trick for drying a dry fly that has been drowned. You use a rubber band attached to your vest. Two websites explain it:

Two Minute Tip: The Rubber Band Method for Drying CDC - the unfamous fly

Video Pro Tip: Dry Your Flies with a Rubber Band - Orvis News

Basically you hook your fly in the rubber band, pull on the tippet to stretch the rubber band, then pluck it like a guitar string several times. The rapid and vigorous vibration causes the water on the fly to be expelled, leaving you with a dry fly that is now dry. Check the two websites.

Ed's second vest suggestion is to attach a big snap swivel to your vest as a third hand when you are trying to tighten the knot after tying on a new fly in midstream. The hook point goes through the snap swivel, leaving both hands free to hold and manipulate the tippet and the tag end of the knot.

Our thanks to Ed – two quite useful tricks to experiment with in these lockdown days.

A final suggestion – the latest issue of the Greenwells Fly Fishing Club newsletter (September 2021) offers three websites for members to check. Under the heading "Lockdown Blues" they say: "Try these links to give you some inspiration and fishing ideas for the coming season:"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dk58GZ4SbgA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jxHljZTKQOI>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iUrKbrcFKw>

Our thanks to Greenwells!

Please take care and stay safe,

Lyndon



Invitation to the VFFA dam day with the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers

Each year the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers invite members of the VFFA to fish their stocked dams on farms around Thorpdale. VFFA members who would like to join them this year should meet at the park opposite the Thorpdale Bakery at 9:00 AM on Sunday, October 10.

LVFF members will meet us there and escort us to various dams where they will act as guides. At lunchtime everyone will return to the park for a barbeque lunch and informal chin wag about the morning's fishing. Then after lunch it's off to another dam for the afternoon session for those who wish. Given good conditions and friendly weather the dams are attractive and interesting fisheries. The water is often clear and can be polaroided along the banks. Occasionally there is a dun hatch.

There is a good opportunity to connect with a 3 or 4 lb brown or rainbow to get the season underway.

VFFA visitors should take \$10 or more cash on the day for raffle tickets. Proceeds for LVFF stocking expenses. To enable the LVFF to plan for both guiding and catering VFFA visitors are limited to 14, first in best dressed. Rollups on the day will not be welcome.

Hamish Hughes has volunteered to be the coordinator this year. So please email him at hthughes@bigpond.net.au if you wish to attend. Hamish will confirm your acceptance beforehand.

N.B. You will be required to scan a QR code with your phone on arrival at the park so that we comply with current regulations.



David Wakefield and Hamish Hughes have both caught superb browns at Thorpdale

Catching Carp

Talking about carp with fly fishers can be a divisive topic. Lots of us hate them with a passion. They are an introduced species that have invaded many of our favourite trout rivers and lakes and have had a damaging impact. Their removal from lakes in Tasmania has been well reported. It took a long time and cost a lot of money.

The websites tell us that carp "cause serious damage to the native fish populations in the lakes and rivers that they infest because they out-compete other fish for food and space. Carp are

also thought to lower water quality, which can kill off sensitive organisms like native freshwater mussels."

And again from another site: "Carp cause their main environmental impacts through their feeding habits. They feed by sucking soft sediment into their mouths, where food items are separated and retained and the sediments are ejected back into the water. When carp are present in high densities, the resultant suspended sediment can result in many problems, including direct >>>

deterioration of water quality due to sediment and increased nutrient levels, reduced light penetration resulting in reduced plant growth, smothering of plants, invertebrates and fish eggs, clogging of gills of other fish species and inhibited visual feeding by other fish species. Their direct impact on plants can also have a number of related impacts, including reduced populations of invertebrates that are dependent on the plants and reduced stability of bottom sediments through loss of aquatic vegetation ..." And there's plenty more.

On the other hand there are a number of fly fishers I know whose attitude is: "They're here now and we probably won't get rid of them, so we might as well exploit them." They are in fact a great species to fish for with a fly. They are often large in size, they are not easy to fool

with a fly, and when caught they pull like tractors. If trout are scarce and there are carp in the water, then fire out a fly and see what you can connect with."

I hope I'm not carping too much, but the RIO company with our great friend Simon Gawesworth produces excellent teaching videos on all manner of fly fishing topics. Here is one I found recently which is very informative on fly fishing for carp. Regardless of your attitude to this species, this teaching video is well worth a look:

https://www.rioproducts.com/learn/fly-fish-for-carp?utm_source=RIO+Newsletter&utm_campaign=ae4685a80e-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2021_08_27_04_40&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1049359efc-ae4685a80e-85112305



Fly Tying Report

Despite the hassles and difficulties created by the current Covid lockdown a very successful fly tying night was held via Zoom on Thursday, August 12.

The demonstrator for this event was VFFA member Geoff Bloch, who demonstrated the tying of his favourite fly – a Reverse Hackle Dun. This fly obviously generated interest among members because close to 30 keen tiers logged into Zoom to watch Geoff in action. After he completed his demonstration the discussion about Geoff's fly and fly tying in general continued on until about 9:00 pm.

While reverse hackle dry flies have been around for years and there are plenty of references to them on the fly tying websites, Geoff's enthusiasm for this particular pattern and his demonstration of the tying (and it doesn't look all that difficult) certainly drew a lot of interest.

We will feature the tying of this fly as our Fly of the Month in our October issue. In the meantime, Geoff made the following comments about the fly he was demonstrating.

He usually ties it in sizes 12 and 14 (though it can obviously be tied in any size), and usually in black but sometimes in brown or red. The silhouette of the fly and its remarkable floating ability are its most important characteristics. Two significant advantages this fly has over a conventionally tied parachute duns are its silhouette - from below, the fish does not see an ugly heavy bit of curved metal and barb emerging from the slender abdomen of the fly as is the case with a conventionally tied parachute hackle, and its flotation. Because the hackle is tied over the hook bend rather than over the eye, the heaviest part of the hook - the bend - has the most flotation support. This is not the case in a conventionally

tied dry fly where most flotation support is at the eye, which is the lightest part of the hook. This tie therefore also enables much more realistic, slender, setae to be tied in to mimic a natural fly, whereas a conventional parachute pattern often has a thick tail to aid in flotation of the heavy hook bend.

A subsidiary advantage of the pattern (which Geoff admits is speculative) is that when cast upstream the fly falls exactly as the natural usually sits on the water, namely head pointing upstream and the setae pointing downstream.

So there it is – the October issue of *Fly Lines* will give all the details you need to tie this very successful and effective dun pattern.

In the meantime, please note that on Thursday, September 23, Andrew

Mossman will be demonstrating the tying of some of his favourite flies.

Again, this will be a Zoom fly tying demonstration. Keep an eye out for an email from Terry Rogers giving the details.



The flies in Geoff Bloch's dry fly box all look the same. That's because they are – all being samples of the Reverse Hackle Dun, Geoff's favourite fly

Tasmanian Trout Fishing – One Month Into The Season

(Many thanks to Chris Wisniewski for the following excellent report on the current Tasmanian trout fishing. Readers should note that while Chris works for the Inland Fisheries Service he is also a very keen and highly skilled fly fisher who has a comprehensive knowledge of the Tasmanian trout fishery.)

The Tasmanian season opened on Saturday, August 7, this year. How is it going?

Many of the lakes are full and spilling, and if not they are rising quickly. The season is off to a flyer with reports of good fishing coming in from all over the state.

We continued getting rain during August, though more in the north and west than in the south. With the recent rain, and more forecast, the major rivers are in flood. This has provided ideal conditions for backwater fishing. Brown trout have returned from spawning and are hungry to put on condition after the winter

months. Hence they have been seeking food in the flooded river margins, tailing as they search for worms and other food washed down in the flood.

Pockets of slack water at the side of the main current have been the best spots to try, especially where farm drains or small creeks enter the main river. A small Woolly Buzzer, or better still a Robin plopped in front of the fish has worked. The Mersey River around Kimberley, the River Leven at Gunns Plains, the Meander River, the mid to lower reaches of the South Esk River and the Macquarie River are all worth a visit and will provide good fishing.

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Early season is a great time to fish Curries River Reservoir. The weather is almost always warmer here than at most other fishing spots, and the fish feed heavily early in the season. Located close to Georgetown on the Bridport Road, Curries River Reservoir is one of Tasmania's many under-fished trout waters. The most sort after food source by the trout here are galaxias, which are prolific in this reservoir. They promote fast growth by the trout and thus provide exciting fishing. Anglers need to keep an eye out for trout chasing schools of galaxias, which are seen rippling the surface when they are being preyed upon by large fish. This happens all over the reservoir and is common on calm days. Persistence and accurate casting pay off in these conditions. Anglers need to use small to medium-sized bait fish patterns.

Little Pine Lagoon has been spilling off and on for the last month. This good

flushing has cleared the water quality that became dirty at the end of last season. The current high level can make fishing difficult, and the cold weather has seen only the most adventurous braving the icy conditions. Fish are in on the edges and although not showing they have been willing to grab a wet fly pulled across their bow.

As previously mentioned, the condition and numbers of fish in the spawning run indicate that Arthurs Lake is recovering strongly. Last season the fish were hard in along the edges early in the season, so the shallow margins at low light times of the day should be the focus. The water level is rising and is on track to reach a good edge-fishing level like it did last year. There haven't been many anglers fishing Arthurs yet, so not much information has been coming in. I will certainly be giving it a look in the next six weeks.



Tassie has begun the season firing on all cylinders. Finn and Rob McDowell did well at Bronte Lagoon

Despite the cold weather Penstock Lagoon has fished steadily for those who like to pull wet flies from a drifting boat. The water level is high and back into the grass, so it is only a matter of time before the fish will move in.

Lake Echo continues to rise and remains on my watch list. It is likely to reach a good level for fly fishing in October as the power station is shut for refurbishment. Anglers should keep an eye on it and target the shallow edges in Brocks and Teal bays along with the Surveyors Marsh when the water level reaches about 4 metres from full. To monitor the water levels go to <https://www.hydro.com.au/water/lake-levels>

Bronte Lagoon fished well on the opening weekend. Similar to the early fishing at Penstock, stripping wets from a boat has been very effective. There have also been fish in around the edges for those willing to be patient and seek them out. And these fish have been in really good condition for this early in the season.

Lake Leake and Tooms Lake have both been spilling. They are still dirty but will clear as the weather settles. There will be good fishing around the edges of both

lakes in coming weeks with wet flies, and dry fly action will commence with red spinners appearing in October.

Fours Springs Lake has been as popular as ever. Angler numbers are starting to settle now after a big opening weekend when lots of fish were caught. Again, stripping wet flies from a boat or around the flooded grassy edges has resulted in plenty of fish caught. There are distinct cohorts of fish from the wild adult brown trout transfers from past years, and there are plenty of magnificent fat, buttery brown trout in the 2 kg plus range that will pull you into the weed beds if you don't hang on tight.

There are many other waters that are worth a look for flooded edge feeders, including Huntsman Lake, Craigbourne Dam, Pine Tier Lagoon, Blackmans Lagoon and Big Waterhouse Lake, to name just a few.

We here in Tasmania are certainly feeling for all of you there in covid lockdown and will do our bit to pester the trout until you can get here. We look forward to seeing you soon.

Chris



A Note from Travis Dowling

Travis Dowling is the Chief Executive Officer at Victorian Fisheries Authority. He is a good friend of the VFFA, and has been guest speaker at our dinners. He offered to write for us a few weeks ago – here is his very welcome article.

If every holiday must have water ...

Maybe you are like me and gave up many years ago on holidays in the desert, or hiking a mountain just for the beauty of the view and the achievement of the hike. My family know, and have always known, I must be near water. Not because I love to swim, or surf, or have an affinity with photos that reflect ponds ... none of

these things. I need to think there's fish nearby and I'm maybe a chance of seeing or catching one, or seeing somebody else do the same.

I love fishing; I always have.

Some people have mused that combining your work and the recreation you love is not a good idea. They are >>>



*Travis Dowling with a large lizard from Lake Tyers.
On a fly Travis?*

wrong. It is the best. Every day I am interested in the content knowledge. Every day, like a fly fisher standing and studying where the fish will be holding, I get to think about how we can make even better fisheries in Victoria. Seriously - it's a crime that they pay me, but one I know my family appreciates.

Many of you know me, and many of you I know. I started work for Fisheries Victoria (now the Victorian Fisheries Authority) in July 2017. I have loved every single day since.

When I started in Fisheries there was a bloke called Doug Joyner who ran the Australia Fishing Tackle Association. Another bloke called Mick Hall was president of a trout group called the Australian Trout Foundation and spent a lot of time with his good friend Merv McGuire. Geoff Hall was guiding the Goulburn at Thornton and asking questions about why Fisheries wasn't stocking the Goulburn. Rex Hunt was (and still is) larger than life and everybody tuned into Rex on 3AW talking fishing. Geoff Lacey was up guiding the Kiewa, and Trevor Holmes was all over Toolondo. People still chatted about the trophy fish from Murdeduke and Modewarre, and Greens Lake near Ararat still attracted the legends of 8 lb browns busting up schools of smelt.

For those who don't know me, and apologies in advance if you've heard about it 37 times, I was born and grew up in Euroa in north-east Victoria. My mum and dad still live in Euroa. Growing up in the bush it was all about fishing and hunting. Many will be familiar with the beautiful Sevens Creek that runs through Euroa. It starts its journey high in the Strathbogie ranges and makes its way all the way down to join the Goulburn River near Shepparton.

My childhood and every summer was spent fishing the creek in town. Every single chance. We would catch lots and lots of carp and a few small redfin. I caught a strange fish one day that was called a trout cod, and we caught many blackfish (we called them slimeys). The day I snagged a 2 lb reddie under a willow tree on worms at my favourite spot was a warm December morning on a Sunday at about 10 am. I was down fishing a spot I had fished many times and got a nibble and saw this massive (it could have been a 15 lb brown) 2 lb

redfin rise to the top and go onto its side revealing those big distinctive stripes. I will always remember and cherish that redfin.

In September the creek would run a bit higher, and we would catch brown trout in town. This was rare because normally you would have to head up to 'Bogie' (Strathbogie) to chase wild brown trout, Macquarie perch and blackfish.

We did some trout fishing at Eildon (bait – mudeyes) and Khancoban and Dartmouth. But we really didn't know what we were doing. My Dad and our family had been cod fishers and all our family before them. But I just loved any fishing - trout, cod, redfin and every other fish.

My first ever trout was caught in the channel, halfway between Euroa and Shepparton. We would drive over on a Saturday afternoon and fish off the bridge hoping to catch a redfin or two, and I'll never forget pulling up my first brown trout onto the bridge. As a fishing fanatic I knew exactly what it was. I would save my pocket money weekly to buy every available fishing magazine, and when friends in town would return from Eucumbene with a number of good brown and rainbow fillets I would ride my bike over to their house just to see the trout coming out of the Esky. I would stare at them in awe and want to hear all the stories about how they were going nuts on a Mrs Simpson. It was a world I was fascinated by.

I have a twin brother Jason and he has always been my partner in crime in fishing. Lots of very friendly rivalry and many incredibly memories. He now lives in Switzerland and trout fishes. When he did that Australian thing and lived in England / Scotland for a while I sent him a fly rod and some flies. He worked as a waiter at a Scottish pub and would



Freshwater success for Travis

try to fly fish. He caught a few browns but never got the massive salmon he was after.

But that's enough about me.

Your Victorian Fisheries Authority (we all work for you) is made up of just the best people. They are mostly mad fishers (much better than me) and they are so committed to making fishing even better in Victoria. People like Anthony Forster, Anthony McGrath, Marc Ainsworth, Michelle Wenner, Dallas D'Silva, Brian Mottram, Taylor Hunt, John Douglas, Julie Morgan and Hui Hoi. Also our Snobs Creek production team - Neil "Kanga" Hyatt, Dylan, Adele and Rhiannon. Supported by our gun Fisheries Officers - Russell "Gus" Strongman, Dan Steele, Sharpy, and lots more."

I have met and made so many friends through fishing and have been inspired by so many people. The incredible work of Terry George (ATF) >>>

President) and support from David 'Choco' Grisold has been incredible. Lyndon Webb is that bloke every club or association dreams of. Lyndon never seeks the spotlight and yet quietly goes about bringing everybody together through this newsletter. There have been so many wonderful people from Peter Boag to Phil Weigall and Geoff Cramer who I've met through the VFFA and other groups and shared wonderful stories of fishing.

I love fishing, all fishing, including fly fishing. I mainly fish the Goulburn and have also loved fishing the Kiewa, Mitta, and Rocky Valley. My biggest challenge is that I also love throwing lures (bits of metal) and sitting and watching a bubble. It's what has stopped me becoming a good fly fisherman (and lack of skill).

Let's chat a little about fly fishing in Victoria. How far we've come and the wonderful relationship the Victorian Fisheries Authority and the Victorian Fly Fishers' Association now enjoy. We support each other and together are making sure fly fishing and trout fishing in Victoria continue to thrive.

Lets tick the box of all the really good things. We have never stocked more trout in more waterways across Victoria than we are now. If you are a purist, please look away now for just a little bit. We have chinooks in a number of waters and some getting up close to 20 lb at Purrumbete. Speaking of Purrumbete, we have Tiger and Cheetah trout there now providing some excitement. We have 10,000 browns a year going into the Goulburn providing a wonderful supplement to this incredible wild fishery.

We are committed to keep on stocking the 'Stonkers'. Yes, I know some people are not the biggest fans of the word 'Stonker' and some people are not that excited about chasing 10 – 12 lb hens



Cod also capture Travis's attention. They are now a great native fish target for fly fishers.

straight out of the hatchery, but let's go on this journey together. They are trout and kids love catching them (and some big kids as well). We are now bringing the Stonkers to all the Melbourne metro lakes – and don't people love catching them. We know its not for everybody but if you said to an 8-year-old Trav, choose between a 30 cm carp in this duck pond or maybe hooking a 10 lb rainbow ... yep.

What are our future opportunities for fly fishing and trout fishing in Victoria? Climate change and warming rivers is a super challenge. But when you have "Trees for Trout", trout fishing volunteers together with native fish volunteers linking up arm in arm to re-plant riverbeds the future is bright. We have large carp pushing up into some of our favourite trout rivers and that's because the rivers are now warmer and providing them a more welcoming environment.

Access to public land on rivers continues to be an opportunity for us. I know there are many VFFA members who were /are concerned about camping on riverbanks. Yep, completely understand. There are also concerns about cattle in riparian



Lakes or rivers - Travis is not fussy. This fine brown came out of Toolondo.

areas and walking through runs where redds have just been laid and in other spots where people have taken it upon themselves to illegally block off all access to riverbanks (the Steavenson being a classic example) – public access to public land. It's something your Fisheries Authority will always fight for – your right to access public land to fish in public waters for your fish.

What's the future look like for your Fisheries Authority and fly fishing/trout fishing in Victoria? More riparian habitat improvement. More trees. More rivers kept cool. Continued stocking, and also new stocking into waters to introduce more Victorians to trout. Always

tweaking our rules and regs – are our bag and size limits still reflecting what we want? What could we do different? We will continue to build on our massive trout opening festivals in Eildon and Ballarat. We will keep our wild trout program running and keep doing science to see how our trout are travelling - which rivers are really going well, and which ones could use a bit more help. We will keep running our Talk Wild Trout conference and we will chat with fishers about opportunities to fly fish for other species such as Murray cod, trout cod and Macquarie perch. We will continue to chat with fishers at angling clubs, river sides and kids 'come and try' fishing events. We will always answer the phone and always be open and approachable. Again – we work for you.

The future for fly fishing in Victoria has never been brighter. We have a government that is 100% committed to recreational fishing. We have record investment in fishing, we have people such as Chris Gray, Terry George, Ben Scullin, Bill Classon, David Kramer, and Rex Hunt - so many advocates for fishing and for continuing to make Victoria the best fishing destination in Australia.

So in case we bump into each other on holidays ... it's going to be on a river ... a lake ... a puddle ... but there will be fish and we will share stories and laughs. 🐟



From Bernard Holbery – Jason Platts drifting a dry down a very attractive run that screams 'fish'

The Annual Dinner with Jim Allen

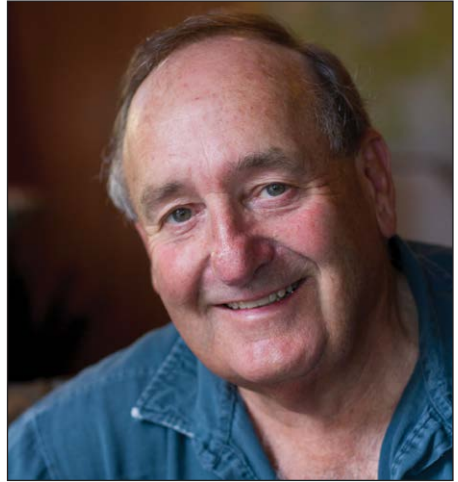
This year's annual dinner was to be on Friday, August 20, at the Kelvin Club, with guest speaker Jim Allen OAM, who is well-known to us all.

Unfortunately, Covid lockdown restrictions forced us to abandon the August date. However Jim is very obliging and flexible, and has agreed to a new date.

Unfortunately, Covid lockdown restrictions forced us to abandon this date. However Jim is very obliging and flexible, and has agreed to a new date.

So this year's Annual Dinner, hopefully at the Kelvin Club, has been re-scheduled for Friday, October 1.

At the dinner Jim will be looking back on living in Melbourne as a youngster growing up and will reflect on the freedoms now lost to those growing up in Melbourne these days. He will also draw some comparisons between the fishing of today, the fishing he knew as a young aspiring fly fisher, and the fishing we



might see in the future.

This will be a fabulous opportunity to hear one of our best, so mark it in your diary – Friday, October 1.

The official invitation to attend, giving details on costs and times, will be emailed out in September to all members by Terry Rogers.

Report From Out West

Fishing reports for our September issue have been rather scarce, but Jim Blakeslee, our regular Western District contributor, has provided some very welcome notes on the fishing around the Warrnambool area.

Unfortunately, with the extension of the Covid lockdown and dirty water in our local rivers after so much winter rain, I haven't been able to catch any trout. I've been waiting until the river water clears and hopefully the 5 km travel radius eases for regional areas such as Warrnambool. In the meantime, I've been able to catch 2 to 3 kg Australian "Salmon" locally, casting a 1/0 Blue and White Deceiver from the beach.

After saying in my earlier email that I was still waiting until the water cleared in the



Success on the upper Merri – Jim tells us that this one weighed 2.4 kg and was full of shrimp

local rivers, I decided to check out the upper Merri River at Grassmere. (It's just within my 5 km Covid radius from home).

Here is the result. There was no surface action, but the water was clear enough to see maybe a metre into it. So I did some upstream nymphing with a brace of flies - a #10 black bead-head Woolly Buzzer with #10 green bug (my shrimp pattern) trailing behind it, and managed to attract three fish to the shrimp. I tossed a couple of 1 kg browns back, but kept this one for the smoker and to check stomach contents.

It was 2.4 kg, 56 cm long and was full of shrimp. So, it looks like the trout season has started for us here in Warnambool. Conditions next week look favourable. I will keep you updated.

A final report today from Jim:

Grassmere yesterday. It was a cool, overcast, windy, 11oC with a bit of "highland mist." I started off using the Woolly Buzzer/shrimp fly combo that I used last week. No luck. So I switched to a #4 "Sandy" (my fly in the VFFA book Time Flies).

I cast it upstream and nymphed it back along the bank ahead of me. Most of the fish took the fly right at the end of the retrieve as the fly swung and started rising



Salmon are a worthy target. This one was caught off a local beach by Jim using a Blue and White Deceiver

to the surface. It attracted half a dozen fish. I lost two, caught four and kept three. The biggest was 2.5kg/58 cm. They were all full of shrimp and some stick caddis. After lunch today I'll go out for the afternoon "rise" and see what's happening. Cheers, Jimbo



A morning's fishing on the upper Merri River. Who said Victorian streams only carry little fish.

The Mother of Invention & The Travel Bag

“... two fascinating tales from George Patterson's delightful *Chasing Rainbows*, published in 1959 when it sold for 18/6 (for those who can still remember the pre-decimal currency days).

The Mother of Invention

During one of my early visits to Khancoban I set off with Norman to explore the Murray River about two miles above Waterfall Farm. We crossed the Suspension Bridge to the right bank and, making our way along a narrow track for about a mile, were then faced with a steep and rough climb over a granite ridge. While it was possible to cross the river at this point, the country on the left bank from then onwards looked even more difficult. So we climbed the high ridge and made our way down to a small sandy beach at the foot of a steep timbered slope.

This faced a delightful stretch of river which flowed both sides of a small green island, and where the two streams combined, the river turned to the left to flow onwards in runs and pools which we had seen from above during our outward journey. We started to put our rods together, and to my horror, when I opened my rod case, it was empty. It was too far and too strenuous to return to the farm for a rod and as the day was blazing hot I decided, philosophically, that it would be a grand opportunity to have a full-scale sunbake.

Norman kindly offered me his rod, but I waved him away and off he went into the river to wade upstream and was soon out of sight. After I had been sunbaking for some time and, as I lay on the sand, I noticed a wattle tree along the bank which had long tapering branches. It gave me an idea and I cut one of the branches, about eight feet long, and trimmed it with my fishing knife. I always carry a small pair of pliers in my bag, so I cut some wire from a fence with which I fastened the reel to

the butt end of the branch and made a few wire loops as runners.

I was now equipped with a rustic rod which I soon fitted up and waded into the water. The wattle stick was quite whippy but after a little practice I was able to cast a fair line about twenty feet across the river. By the time I had worked my way to the top of the run I had three rainbows of just under 1 lb. Norman came down the river in due course and I was surprised to learn he had had a blank morning.

He had a great laugh at my home-made rod as we waded back to the beach where we boiled the billy and had lunch. It was decided to fish odd spots on the homeward journey and en route I tried my luck high over a deep, fast-moving pool and, after a few casts, to my surprise a rainbow of about 3 lb took my fly and shot away downstream. It was a hopeless task to play a big fish in fast water from a high bank with my home-made rod and after a while the trout broke.

The incident reminded me of an experience on the Goodradigbee River one afternoon when my rod broke at the first joint and I thought my fishing for that day was over. However, someone suggested binding the reel to the base of the second joint which I succeeded in doing and was surprised to find how well I could cast. In fact, from then on I got more fish than I had landed since we had started in the morning.

The Travel Bag

Many years ago, when I travelled frequently between Sydney and Melbourne, I sometimes accompanied a dear friend, the late R. B. Hungerford. One

morning on the train between Albury and Melbourne I discovered I had a broken shoelace, and R.B.H. immediately opened what he called his "travel bag" and, after rummaging about for a few moments, he produced a pair of new laces.

"You know," he said, "I keep this bag packed permanently, and over the years I have added dozens of things which I found I often needed in some crisis."

I looked into the bag and it was a veritable junk shop of bottles, bandages, tins, packets, needles, and thread, and a hundred things, as well as the usual toilet accessories.

From that time I started to build my own travel bag, which these days has become a regular part of fishing gear. Its weight and contents are considerable, and have often aroused jocular protests, particularly in the early days when the bag had to be loaded on to a packhorse for the long journey to the Geehi from Khancoban.

However, over the years, on the Geehi and other isolated Alpine trout streams, the contents of that travel bag have been a boon and a blessing, not only to myself, but to fishing companions.

And just for the fun of it, I recently made an inventory of its present contents, the idea of which, either more or less, I strongly recommend to those who go into rough country far from civilisation ...

Gillette Travel Set, Spare Blade Dispenser, Shaving Brush, Shaving Stick, two Toothbrushes, Dental Cream, Nylon Nailbrush, Soft Pumice, Hair Oil, Hairbrushes, Clothes brush, Rubber-soled Slippers, Plastic Denture Cushions, Spare Dentures, Denture Adhesive, Chain Clip for Spectacles, Flask of Brandy, Electric Lamp, Eye Drops, Black Sleep Shades, Plastic Ear Plugs, Various Adhesive Plasters, Elastoplast Strip Dressings, Colourless Iodine, Zinc

Ointment, Antiseptic Creams, Sleeping Tablets, Sleeping Capsules, Acriflavine Antiseptic, Scissors, Nail File, Tweezers, Empirin Compound Tablets, Codral Tablets, Suntan Oil, various Soaps, Spare Distance Glasses, Spare Reading Glasses, Special Dark Glasses, Large Monocle for fly changing. Paint for sore gums. Sulfadiazine Tablets, White Lipstick (for sunburn), Nasal Inhaler, Endrine Nasal Drops, Antiseptic Throat Lozenges, Antiseptic Powder, Surgical Lint, Cotton Wool, Bromo Quinine Tablets, Bisodol Powder and Tablets, Solyptol Antiseptic, Selection of Bandages, Safety Pins, Brown Linen Thread, Needles, Length of Fine Cord, Elastic Bandages, Snakebite Outfit and Whistle, Leather Boot Laces, Rubber Sponge, Enos Fruit Salts, Pipe Cleaners, Rubber Bands, Spare Cigarette Lighter, Plastic Drinking Cup, Folding Coat Hanger, Two Packs Cards, Writing Paper and Envelopes, Spare Ballpoint Pen, Pencil, and Rubber, Wire-cutting Pliers, Combination Screwdrivers.

Several times before starting on my fishing holiday I have contemplated reducing the contents of the "travel bag." But with the recollection of its widely availed of benefits during previous expeditions, I have said to myself, "You never know," and left the collection intact.



From Bernard Holbery's collection. He was overnighing in an isolated bush cabin

The Nobby Hopper on the Bidgee

... from David Scholes. One of Scholes's early books was his *Trout Quest*, first published in 1969. It is a delight to read, and timeless in its appeal. In a section headed 'Thoughts and Reflections' he describes a couple of days he spent fishing the Murrumbidgee with Fred Stewart. Fred had acquired a deadly hopper pattern he called the Nobby Hopper. David had his reservations. (The following material is used with permission, and is edited slightly to reduce its length.)

In its upper reaches, above Lake Tantangara, the Murrumbidgee appeals to me greatly. Not that I am a frequent or regular fisher of the area, my visits occurring only every year or two. And I always present myself on the banks of the "Bidgee", as it is affectionately known, in February. This is for two reasons: first because the grasshoppers are abundant and active at this time, and second because Tasmania's fishing, especially in the rivers, often falls off in February.

Fred Stewart has been my usual guide on the "Bidgee". We know each other so well and have spent so much time together over many years on many waters. We know how to fish together, and this is a really important thing.

On my last trip to the "Bidgee" I was introduced to some new water and made friends with a most extraordinary fly, being so impressed by its performance that I would not feel confident in making a return trip without it. The proof of its potency was quite overwhelming, leaving no doubt at all. I do not for a moment suggest that the fly is the answer to all grasshopper fishermen's dreams everywhere. But this much I will say: it is by far the most successful pattern I have used in this area.

We were staying with Harvey Palfrey at Kiandra, having driven up from Melbourne in Fred's old Chevrolet utility which, once it got the idea, was willing to go almost anywhere. Previously I had fished mainly in the vicinity of the junction of the Murrumbidgee and

Tantangara Creek and above. But on this occasion, in February of 1967, after a couple of days fishing in other places to get my eye in, Fred declared it time to tackle the "Bidgee" a few miles above Lake Tantangara—an area which, at that time anyway, had rarely seen an angler, especially one equipped with the fly, and more especially equipped with this particular fly!

Accordingly, immediately after breakfast the next morning Fred took the wheel and drove with much eagerness and probably too much speed to the first of several progressively less defined tracks that led us to the eastern side of the "Bidgee". Then, after a hot, gruelling and dusty ride across what is known as Dairyman's Plain, necessitating the opening and closing of no less than nine gates, we finally arrived at a spot where the track makes so swift a descent down the hillside that even Fred's enthusiasm was curbed and it was decided to leave the truck at the top ready for our return.

Rods were rigged, lunch packed aboard, and the millions of small black flies kept reasonably at bay by the application of a generous spraying of repellent, especially around the backs of our necks and under the brims of our hats. And so we set off, Fred leading the charge, on a march of some mile and a half up the valley, which he claimed to be necessary in order to reach the best water. Obediently I followed, though my eyes gleamed with desire as I looked over one or two stretches we passed by.

Indeed I enquired more than once was this or that water not worthy of a cast. But with emphasis I was told no, not just yet, and it's not far now. You know the sort of thing I'm sure, when on and on you go until your feet get hot and tired and you feel more like sitting down in the shade than fishing.

It was now about eleven o'clock and since leaving the hotel the temperature had climbed steadily. However, a freshening breeze began blowing from the north-west and this kept us pleasantly cool.

We began fishing at a long, deep, flat pool for which Fred had made a beeline; clearly nothing short of artillery fire was going to stop him, so I knew that the pool must be good. I elected to fish the near side which looked rather good to me, but the far side, to which Fred immediately began casting, was where the fish were, lying there I expect to gather the grasshoppers that were constantly being blown in and across to them. Not a single rise did I get from the whole pool, while Fred extracted a brace of nice browns about three and a half pounds up.

Right from the outset, of course, Fred had on the special fly and this was no doubt the reason for his impressive success. But even at this stage, when I should have known better, although Fred had given me four new ones before we started, I still stuck to smaller, old, and I thought, faithful patterns. I had begun with O'Brien's rather bourgeois grasshopper tie, then changed to the elaborate Burchdoldt, and later, after no response bar several small ones returned and the usual swarm of smaller ones still that snap and bite at anything you put on, I had changed once again to a Geehi Beetle.

With this I battled on bravely, fishing as carefully and cunningly as I could, but it made no difference; the fish were intrigued with what Fred had on and



A famous photo of David Scholes holding a 4 lb brown he caught from the Break-O-Day in Tasmania's north-east"

wanted to eat it. They were never that fascinated with the Geehi Beetle and more than once it let me down.

If you fish these upland rivers for a time you will soon pick up a few tricks, one of them being to fish very carefully wherever a creeklet or trickle joins the river, because somewhere thereabouts, likely as not, lies a weighty fish waiting on watch.

Thus I came to this streamlet running in from my left. The bank was nicely elevated and a thick growth of tall grass made an ideal screen. I was facing the sun and my backcast was clear. What else could I want? A trout, you say, that's what he wants. And this is just what I saw. Creeping forward, peering carefully through the grass, I spotted him almost at once. I could hardly have missed him. Goodness knows there was plenty enough of him — more than two feet anyway. Anything, say, between four and seven pounds of him. He lay there quite peacefully, about four feet out and a good cast ahead.

Fred was behind me and on the same side, so there was no chance >>>

of him scaring the fish. It was up to me entirely, and I knew it. I manoeuvred into position and cast with every confidence. The first shot, a sighter, was a bit short and too far to the left. I retrieved carefully and the next cast landed the fly rather prettily I thought right on the button, the Geehi Beetle approaching him dead on track and sitting up beautifully. Nearer it came and nearer, and up under it his nibs rose like a great log, eyeing it closely as he fell back with it downstream.

For one fleeting moment as he moved even closer — upon reflection I think only to examine my knot — I felt sure he was mine. But then, with a contemptuous look, he eased down under the grassy overhang and disappeared from view, never to re-appear as far as I am concerned, although on a subsequent visit without me Fred found him there, but somehow upset him. Thinking back I have not the slightest doubt that this grand fish would have treated Fred's fly with delight. But even after this setback I still kept the same fly on. Truly I was an idiot that day.

And at the very next pool, having crossed in the shallows below, Fred sent his fly over a deep glide under a dead gum. From my side the sun was just at the right angle for me to see the long dark shape materialise under it, and then seize it. Fred's strike — most unusual for him — was a shade early, but the fish was hooked and immediately set off downstream, lunging and boring. I was not greatly surprised, however, when they parted company, the trout, of at least four pounds, gliding under a huge flat stone just a few yards upstream from Fred. A slightly mistimed strike often ends in a lost fish like this.

Fred now proclaimed it lunchtime, so we sat in the thick grass on the bank of the next run and set to. As I munched

on a sandwich I began at last to give serious consideration to changing my fly. Suddenly Fred stiffened, thinking he saw a movement in the middle of the river. He picked up his rod, and still seated with his lunch spread on his knees, cast out as best he could, the fly riding the current awkwardly. However, almost at the end of its drift, a fish of more than two pounds rose up from the depths to take it with apparent relish; Fred having no trouble in setting the hook firmly.

This was the last straw. Without any further prompting from Fred I hastily cut off the Geehi Beetle and tied on the strange fly, Fred having now bagged six nice fish up to four pounds while I had worked feverishly for my two — and they were nothing to boast about either.

With the new fly on I felt better. At least I had taken the plunge. I sat there examining it. What a monster it was! This, I think, had been my objection all the time. It was a huge thing, a full inch and a quarter overall.

It seems that the basic design for this unusual fly came from the USA, being based on the work of Don Gapen of Ontario, Canada, who originated that now universally acclaimed pattern the Muddler Minnow. It had been given to Fred to try out, but bearing so long and awesome a title that he had re-named it as simply the Nobby Hopper.

Our hurried meal over we prepared to move on, Fred motioning me to begin. The pool was really part of a bend where the river made a wide turn to the west, divided in the centre by several large rocks. I turned my attention to the upstream run on the nearer side, which was deep and attractive water. Out went the Nobby Hopper to land rather clumsily at the head of the run. It had not gone a yard when, to my utter astonishment, a great fish loomed up

beneath it, rolled over it and down, his broad tail waving in the air as he went. He was the easiest fish in the world to hook and was soon in Fred's net. Almost four pounds. First cast!

What further proof could I need? Armed with the Nobby Hopper and with new enthusiasm and confidence, I attacked the water like a champion, soon adding another trout to the bag. Fred, now on the other side, took a good one also that charged out from the shade under the bank for at least eight feet to gobble his Nobby Hopper.

Suddenly about four o'clock the wind doubled in strength, tearing down the valley full in our faces. We had no alternative but to give up — probably just as well as we had a long walk ahead of us back to the car, and Fred's seven fish amounted to a fair weight to carry.

The next day the weather was unsuitable, so we fished elsewhere. But the following morning saw us returning for a further bout, this time with me driving and Fred opening the gates! When we came to the steep incline I had the old Chev careering down the slope before Fred knew it. At the bottom the going was flat and, except for a creek which had to be forded, free of obstructions. We drove for almost a mile before the Bidgee itself barred the way. Thus our walk up the river before starting was considerably shortened. We rigged our rods eagerly by the side of the river, the hoppers leaping all around us and the horrid little flies all over us.

Today I hit the ball right in the middle from the start. No half-measures; I meant business. With the Nobby Hopper I intended to smite them soundly, and I began with a brace of two-pounders from the first length. Before Fred opened his account, I had another from the head of the next long pool. I was certainly in a villainous mood.

Next I hung back on purpose, letting Fred go ahead about a hundred yards on the opposite side. The purpose of this devilry was simple—I have done it before and will doubtless do it again. As Fred moved along the bank he disturbed a cloud of hoppers before him. Some of them, in their terror, jumped too lustily or without thought of direction, and landed with a plop in the water. The result, of course, was that a plenteous and steady shower of hoppers fell in and floated downstream, kicking frantically all the way. Now just an odd hopper, or even a sprinkling, is not always sufficient to rouse any interest from those opulent and well-fed trout, but when a veritable harvest of them keeps coming down even the most somnolent fish can be stirred into action.

So there we were—Fred frightening the hoppers over the edge and me taking full advantage below. As soon as a fish began gathering an easy meal my fly would be there in a twinkle. The resemblance between the Nobby Hopper and the natural grasshopper was striking, and more than once I found myself watching the wrong thing. I also found difficulty in getting a fish to take the artificial instead of any one of a dozen naturals nearby. In spite of this, however, I soon had two more in the bag. With one more, taken in a long, shallow, bubbling straight after Fred had returned to my side, I now had a total of six nice trout, all on the Nobby Hopper, and I must have missed, pricked or lost a few more.

It happens in the Snowy Mountains area that the build-up of cumulus cloud on a summer's day, which starts about nine o'clock and reaches in some places a fairly considerable height by midday, sometimes results in localised thunderstorms. This was that sort of day - warm and threatening. Before long light rain began falling and >>>

thunder could be heard in the distance. My waterproof golf jacket, always stored in my waistcoat, was soon put to service, while things generally now looked anything but promising.

In addition, we began to worry about getting out up that steep hill, and the more it rained the more serious became our concern. However it soon eased off appreciably and we determined to go on. I was especially keen because we were not that far from the place where the creek came in and my big fish lay. And I felt sure the Nobby Hopper would take him. But some four hundred yards short of the creek it began raining once more. I managed to snare another two pounder from a lovely bubble-capped ripple near the far bank, but then, accompanied by an ugly boom of thunder, we were deluged properly. We fled for the truck, fervently hoping that we could get out, with Fred consoling me with the assurance that if not, Harvey would surely send his Land Rover in search of us.

This was my big trout's lifesaver, his salvation. I can see him now, the great, insolent corpulent loafer. I can see him coming to the Nobby Hopper and taking it nonchalantly. And I can see me netting him out too, not without bother mark you. And I can see him lying vanquished on the highland grass, all shining and with beautiful markings. O yes, long will his memory be with me.

Back at the Chev we hurriedly tossed everything aboard and departed, the rain now having eased to a steady drizzle. We had no trouble over the flat and at the creek, but even although I charged at the hill full tilt we began skidding at once. By sheer momentum, however, we tore on upwards and I kept the engine flat out. Sliding, bucking and wobbling we reached the summit, with earth, mud and stones flying out behind.

With great relief we went quietly on over the comparatively easy going down to Lake Tintangara, where we fished until dusk. There is not much doubt that had we not left the "Bidgee" when we did we would never have climbed the hill.

There is not much finesse or delicacy about fishing the Bidgee. It is almost impossible to cast the Nobby Hopper without a heavy and crude sort of landing. This, of course, is all to the good, since the natural grasshoppers alight on the surface in anything but a dignified way. Most of the fishing is blind, too, which never compares with casting to a rise.

The clear, open banks of the "Bidgee", however, and the lovely surroundings — the bright blue sky in the morning, the clean, fresh air, the beautiful colouring of the stones, the rugged mountaintops all round — these things and much more besides give the whole area, and especially the river, a quality of greatness, a distinctive and delicious flavour that keeps drawing you back.



Bernard Holbery fishing one of his beloved little creeks

FLY OF THE MONTH

A Tale of Two Greenwells (from Robert Bailey)



When I was asked by President Chris Gray to provide a Fly of the Month his comment was something along the lines of “can you do a traditional pattern and something a bit more modern?” My initial thoughts were yes, but where do you start? What’s traditional and what’s modern? Where does a variant fit? Which of the thousands of patterns do I select?

In the end, for this month’s Fly of the Month I’ve chosen what would be considered one of the most well-known flies - the Greenwells (aka Greenwells Glory).

You’ll notice that what I’m describing isn’t the original tying. This pattern has had several transformations over the many years it’s been around, responsive to the whim of the tier as much as the needs of the angler. If you have a yearning to learn more about the Greenwells, I would recommend *Greenwells: A Review*, by Des Walters. Des’s book covers the history of the Greenwells and its variations. And it’s a great read.

Anyway, back to the fly. The tying I’m describing below is based on the North Country manner of tying winged soft hackles and this fly has proven to be very successful for me in our alpine waterways.

To accommodate the “modern” aspect, I’ve also prepared some notes on a second rendition I tie which will be featured as the Fly of the Month in the November issue.

But first, a word on fishing soft hackles. They can be fished in a variety of ways, but keep in mind the allurements of a mobile hackle. So before deciding to fish this fly using the popular down and across technique (which has a tendency to suck the hackle back against the hook), consider fishing it upstream on a long leader held high, or fishing it as you would a dry fly, or even as a dropper on a nymph rig (particularly in low water).

On to the tying...

Greenwells Soft Hackle (Spider)

Hook:	Dohiku 254 sizes 12-16 (A straight-eyed hook is needed. Most popular hook manufacturers produce straight eye models.)
Thread:	Pearsalls Gossamer #3 Primrose, well-waxed. The next best alternative is YLI 100 Silk #261.
Rib:	Extra Fine Gold wire (I’m using Hends 0.09 diam)
Wing:	Matching starling slips
Hackle:	Greenwells Hen Neck

Tying Procedure

1. After securing the hook in the vise, wax several inches of the thread and catch it in about 1 - 2 mm behind the eye with 4 - 5 turns. Remove the waste end.
2. Take a length of the gold wire and catch it in on the far side of the hook. Run the thread down the hook shank trapping the wire against the far side of the shank. Stop tying it in at a point opposite the hook point (but no farther than in line with the barb – check the photo).
3. Bring the thread up back towards the eye in touching turns. Stop where you have a single turn left to reach the edge of the first layer of thread from point 1. This “gap” will be filled by the first turn when catching in the wire. Wax the thread.
4. This step is important - bring the wire under the hook shank and make four open turns, evenly spaced, back to the eye. (You could make five turns on bigger hooks, but no more than five). End your last turn at the thread. Catch the wire with one turn on the layer beneath, and a second turn on the bare shank.
5. Holding some tension on the thread, gently wiggle the wire to break the surplus away. Wax the thread again.
6. (You have a choice here - either hackle under or over the wings. My preference is over; but if you prefer to go under the wing simply reverse the steps below.)
7. Cut two starling slips of about 4 - 5 fibres in width. Match the ends with the curve away from each other. Catch the slips in with two turns so the wing is

about the length of the shank. If you're happy, secure with a third turn (ideally keeping the thread towards the base of the wings).

8. Trim away the excess wing material as close as possible to the thread in order to leave a clean base for the hackle.
9. Select a hackle. The fibre length should be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ – 2 times the hook gape; but this can be your choice. Remove the fluffy base fibres leaving an exposed stem. Using small fine hackle pliers, catch the tip of the hackle and draw the fibres back away from the tip. You'll want about a 10 mm or so of fibres, enough for 2 - 3 turns of hackle. Holding the hackle to keep the fibres back, nip out the tip to leave a small triangle about 1 mm long. This is what you will use to catch the hackle in with.
10. Present the hackle with the stem backwards and outside of the feather facing you, and tie in the small triangle tip of the hackle with 2 - 3 turns of thread.
11. Take your hackle pliers and catch the stem (carefully!), then gently draw the fibres up and back. While managing the hackle fibres, make 2 - 3 touching turns of the hackle winding down the shank. Catch in the stem with two turns of thread. Trim away the stem as close as possible to the thread. Wax your thread.
12. Finish the fly with a 3 - 4 turn whip finish and trim the waste thread away. Preen the hackle to ensure an even spread of fibres and arrangement.



VFFA 2021 meetings & other activities

(... subject of course to the possibility of further lockdowns)

September

- 4 Saturday Victorian rivers open again to trout fishing
16 Thursday 2021 Annual General Meeting - 8:00 pm via Zoom - see link in newsletter
19 Sunday Start of new season Barbecue, at Acheron, commencing at 11:30 am
23 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, with Andrew Mossman as instructor
29 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

October

- 1 Friday Annual Dinner - 6:00 pm
Guest Speaker - Jim Allen – “My Life Fishing”
3 Sunday 10 am: President’s Casting Day at Red Tag Pool
10 Sunday Annual trip to Thorpdale to fish the Latrobe Valley club’s stocked dams as guests of the Latrobe Valley Fly Fishers
21 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker: Tony Stewart, who will tell us about fishing the streams in the Otways.
27 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

November

- 12 – 14 Annual Trip to Warrnambool
17 Wednesday Millbrook Lakes – 11:00 am till dark
18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 pm at the Kelvin Club:
Speaker: to be confirmed
21 Sunday Streamcraft session by David Grisold and Nymph Techniques by Joanne and Rick Dobson. 10:00 am start, barbecue lunch at 2:00 pm. Acheron address TBC
23 Thursday Winter Fly Tying at Aussie Angler, 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm, with Andrew Mossman as instructor
24 Wednesday Council Meeting – 6:30 pm at the Kelvin Club

December

- 10 Friday Annual Christmas Dinner at the Kelvin Club,
Speaker: TBC

(VFFA events still to be finalised include Sunday Casting, casting tuition, winter fly tying, and classes on nymphing and river tuition on local streams. The date for this year's Donger Competition is also still to be settled.)