

FLY LINES



FEBRUARY 2017

February – a Lunch Meeting with Rick Dobson

Our first meeting for the new year, the February meeting, will be another lunchtime meal in the Shamrock Restaurant at the Celtic Club.

Guest speaker for this meeting will be Rick Dobson, a loyal and supportive VFFA member, and the very friendly and helpful proprietor of the Aussie Angler tackle store.

Rick is a very skilled and experienced angler who has fished top locations all over the world. He feels that it's perhaps a bit too easy for us to be caught up in all the latest fads and gimmicks floating around. Rick likes to keep it uncomplicated, so at our February he will give us his 'simplistic strategies and tactics for catching trout in Victoria, Tassie and New Zealand'.

Rick is always a very informative and entertaining speaker, and his presentation will be well worth hearing.

Thursday, February 23,
12 Noon at the
Celtic Club

So, mark it in your diary – Thursday, February 23, 12 Noon at the Celtic Club.

But PLEASE make a Lunch booking by 5:00 pm on Tuesday, February 21, by phoning 0498 254 497 and leaving a message.



THE VICTORIAN FLY FISHERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

VOL. 65 NO.4 – FEBRUARY 2017

Organisation No. A0024750J

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

info@vffa.org.au **www.vffa.org.au**

President

Mike Jarvis

Email: president@vffa.org.au

Honorary Treasurer

Tony Mitchem

Email: treasurer@vffa.org.au

Honorary Secretary

Kevin Finn

Email: secretary@vffa.org.au

Honorary Editor

Lyndon Webb

Email: editor@vffa.org.au

VFFA Website Administrator

Kevin Finn

Email: webadmin@vffa.org.au

Honorary Librarian

Rick Dugina

Email: library@vffa.org.au

Other Council members:

Senior Vice President: John Permewan

Councillors: Alex Evans

David Grisold

Dermot O'Brien

John Pilkington

Jason Platts

Terry Rogers

Ian Sambell

Hamish Hughes (Immediate Past President)

All material copyright © all rights reserved. No part of the contents of this publication may be reproduced without prior written consent of the publisher. Published monthly by The Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Inc., PO Box 18423 Melbourne Bourke Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3001.

Index

VFFA Office Holders	2	NOE – Big River	21
Web Fish	3	A Tale Of Two Andrews.....	22
President’s Message	4	This Month’s Yarn	27
March Meeting With Andrew Mossman	5	Snowy Mountains In Spring.....	28
New Members.....	5	It Has Changed Now, Surely.....	30
Christmas Dinner With Philip Weigall	6	‘Time Flies’ – The Third VFFA Book.....	31
Editor’s Desk – Lyndon Webb	16	What About A New Rod?	31
Vale – Peter McLean	18	Fly of the Month.....	32
VFFA Trips.....	20	VFFA Meetings & Activities	36

Web Fish

Cast regularly at vffa.org.au

About the VFFA web site:

The VFFA web site has a comprehensive coverage of VFFA events, meetings , trips, ...updated monthly making it easy to track dates and times.

Features of VFFA web site:

- Monthly Newsletter delivered to members in full colour.
- Live access to more than five years of past Newsletters
- Newsletter in PDF format for easy reading on computers / iPads / tablets & smart phones
- Newsletter in PDF format that can be read and saved on iPads and tablets like eBooks
- Calendar of all activities that can be synced with all you digital device calendars
- Gallery of events - Photos and Event reports
- Where to fish directories: Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, New Zealand

President's Message

I hope you all enjoyed a Merry Christmas and I wish you and your families a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

I have to admit I have not wet a line for a while, and probably won't for a few more weeks, but from what I have heard from a number of sources the Victorian rivers are looking really good and promising some potentially exciting late summer and autumn fishing. I certainly hope so.

It was great to have Philip Weigall as our guest speaker for the Christmas Dinner. He is always such an informative speaker. His title "A few ideas to catch more trout" was an excellent choice and I think even the most experienced anglers in the room would have to admit that it taught them something new- or at least reminded them of a technique they had forgotten about.

So now, on to 2017. What will it hold? Hopefully our local fishing will continue to improve. A lot of information I am receiving points to it, so I'm keeping my fingers crossed.

From a VFFA point of view 2017 promises to be very interesting. We have already entered into preliminary negotiations with the Red Tag Fly Fishing Club regarding the use of their hut in Yarra Bend Park. Thus far there have been no new developments, but we will keep you posted.

We also have a great line-up of guest speakers for our monthly meetings for the year. Speakers like Antony Boliiancu from the Goulburn Valley Fly Centre and Rick Dobson from Aussie Angler, and plenty more. We will be striving to attract more of the same during the year, so please come along and enjoy their presentations



and show your support. And if you have any suggestions for guest speakers you would like to hear, please let us know so that we can follow up on them.

We are also in the early stages of a potential trout habitat improvement project on a stretch of the Goulburn River in conjunction with the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority. This sort of project fits nicely with the VFFA's overall objectives. After all, improving habitat means improving opportunities for a healthier and increased trout population, and that translates into improved fishing. This project is something else we'll keep you informed of as we proceed.

Well, that's about it from me. I look forward to catching up with you at our luncheon meeting on February 23 at the Celtic Club when Rick Dobson will be our guest and I'm sure a most interesting speaker.

Until then, good fishing and tight lines.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip Weigall'.

March Meeting - with Andrew Mossman

First, members need to note that the March meeting has been moved – from March 16 to March 23.

Andrew Mossman has agreed to speak at our March meeting. Andrew is a long-standing member of the Association and a very experienced and immensely successful fly fisher and fly tier. He commenced fly fishing in the 1950's with his father, and got to know the rivers in our state's north-east and in southern NSW. He also spent a lot of time fishing Tasmania's rivers and highland lakes, and has ample photographic evidence of big bags of large fish deceived and caught in Little Pine and elsewhere.

At various times over the years he has enjoyed opportunities to fish in the UK, Canada, the USA and Patagonia, but his passion are the rivers in New Zealand's South Island. He has fished the rivers of Southland every year for the past 25 years, and more recently two or three times each year, and has earned a well-deserved reputation as the 'Mataura Master'.

Andrew has written a book, which is virtually his fly fishing autobiography, called *My Fly-Fishing Life*. The book is now complete and is currently being organized for printing.



Trout like these draw Andrew back to New Zealand

He has given some thought to his topic for March 23 and has decided to discuss fly design, as opposed to fly patterns, and how that relates to choosing which fly to use during a testing fishing day. If time permits he will also discuss some aspects of downstream wet fly fishing.

So, mark it in your diary – Thursday, March 23, at the Celtic Club.

New Members

It is our great pleasure this month to welcome Steven and Marianne Wallace as new members of the VFFA. We trust that their membership brings many

pleasant and enjoyable times, along with lots of wonderful memories. Steven and Marianne - a very warm welcome to the VFFA.

Christmas Dinner with Philip Weigall

Our final meeting for 2016, our Christmas Dinner, was very well attended. It was a fabulous occasion, too. Two of our members, Wally Brandtmann and Chris Morris, were presented with certificates and badges to acknowledge their 50 years of membership. (Stuart Whelan has also reached 50 years of membership, but unfortunately was not able to attend.) Two 25 year members were also honoured on the evening, these being Bruce Houghton and our guest speaker Philip Weigall.

The meal was excellent, the members were in fine spirits, and guest speaker Philip Weigall was in sparkling form, drawing a long and enthusiastic round of applause at the completion of his presentation. A summary of the text of Philip's talk is given here.

I foolishly didn't give any thought to my 25 year membership award, so haven't got a lot to say about it, except for two things. The first is that it was Jack Ritchie who persuaded me to join the VFFA. He was a delightful man, and was also (which is why he asked me to join) a campaigner for our trout. He was a very measured, intelligent, and quite successful advocate for our trout fisheries.



Guest Speaker Philip Weigall

For the younger members here tonight it's important for you to understand that back when I joined the VFFA our trout fisheries were in genuine trouble. We had no trout regulations at all. You could keep 20 spawners if you felt like it and were well within the law to do so. There was no closed season, no bag limit and no size

limit. The attitude of the government of the day was that trout were an introduced species that were at best tolerated. There was even talk of using Rotenone to remove them from some streams. In my darker moments I feared that the trout fishery in this state was just going to fade away.

However we now have a government and a fisheries agency that actively promote and support trout fishing, and I think one of the reasons for this dramatic change was because of the work of people like Jack Ritchie. Not the only reason by any means, but one of the reasons. So don't take it for granted.

The second thing I would say is that I think the VFFA is a really good organisation. I'm not a club man, but I recognise the value of clubs. Good clubs do a lot for the community and in promoting the various sports and pastimes they represent. If one word sums up the VFFA for me it is the word 'integrity'. This organisation has integrity because it is welcoming and thoughtful organisation. It has a strong newsletter and it continues the Jack Ritchie tradition of being a firm but thoughtful advocate for trout fishing in particular and fishing in general. And I think that any member of the VFFA, and particularly those who have been on the executive, should be very proud of that.



President Mike Jarvis with our 50 and 25 year recipients. From left - Chris Morris, Wally Brandtmann, Mike Jarvis, Philip Weigall and Bruce Houghton

I thought tonight that we might talk about catching more trout. Now, we've all been on fantastic trips when we didn't catch as many fish as we had hoped. Great company, good friends, beautiful country and superb cooking are all part of a great trip, and I'm very conscious of all that. But tonight we're going to get down to the pointy end of actually catching a few more trout.



A beautiful sunset, but what about the trout?

I want to start with the premise that anybody who wants to be an effective fly fisher can be. I have taught hundreds, if not thousands, of guests and friends to fly fish, and I can tell you that anyone who had enthusiasm and some decent direction became an effective fly fisher if they wanted to be. Fly fishing success is achievable by almost anybody, regardless of natural aptitude. One of the best sight fishers I know wears glasses as thick as the bottom of beer mugs, and one of the best casters that I know has an acquired brain injury. Yes, you need to do some work, but very good fly fishing is achievable, and you don't need to devote your life to it to be effective.

What I want to do tonight is talk about some simple things. I'm coming from a position of seeing the same mistakes repeated over and over, and I'm thinking to myself there's a few things that you can put into practice without a lot of effort that will make your fly fishing so much more successful. >>>

The starting point is a concept my friend Rob Meade came up with a few years ago. He said, "Philip, we're just puppeteers. We've got this box of lifeless fur and feathers wound on metal hooks that wouldn't fool a guppy, and it's our job as fly fishers to bring those flies to life." So that's what we are – we're puppeteers, and I think we can go a long way with that analogy.

A good puppeteer understands the audience, and the first thing you need to remember about our audience is that every single fish big enough to bother catching is elite. It is a survivor. There's a wonderful book called *The Artful Science of Trout Fishing*, and the authors, Les Hill (a very keen angler) and John Hayes (a fishery scientist) tell us that typically for every legal size trout caught, at least 300 of that year class have already died.

You don't fluke being a successful trout, and every trout that you fish for is elite. It has elite survival instincts, it is incredible at hiding, it is absolutely efficient at feeding, and it doesn't make mistakes. These are trout that have been bred from thousands of generations of parent trout that have gone through the same process. So if you are wondering on some days why you can't see any trout, or why they won't eat your fly, then there is the reason. You are fishing to elite fish that don't fluke being a two-year-old, let alone a three-year-old or four-year-old. All the slightly imperfect ones are gone before you get to fish to them.



Every trout big enough to catch is an elite survivor.

When you are fishing to a fish in that kind of environment you have to think about what makes them comfortable. Given the high rate of attrition one thing that is going to make them comfortable is feeling safe from predators. Low light early and late in the day, night time, a ripple on the water, a bit of discoloration in the water – all these make it harder for predators to see them. We mightn't like it all that much, but one fisheries biologist said to me: "Trout love dirty water because then the things that want to kill them can't find them." And, of course, they also love physical structure - boulders, undercuts, and logjams. This is stuff that we don't particularly like when we are fishing because it gets in the way, but trout really love it.

Of course you can have the most beautiful undercut bank in the world, but if there are no trout in the river then it's all for nothing. So the trout need to be there, and we will talk about that later.

Temperature is important. It surprises me that so many reasonably sophisticated trout anglers don't give more consideration to water temperature. Often the excuse is, "Well, I don't get to choose the water temperature because it's one of those factors like rain and sun and wind and cold. I get to go fishing on Sundays and I just fish with the conditions that I've got." But the thing about water temperature is that it is usually possible in a particular area to find a water temperature that fits the required parameters. If the water is too warm trout become stressed. They will tolerate temperatures greater than 23°C if the food reward is there, but they can't tolerate them for long and will quickly retreat to somewhere cooler.

They are not threatened with death by temperatures under 6°C, but they do become lethargic, and a lot of the things

they eat also slow down. So, if you can find water that is in that comfortable range this is going to help you. In hot summers you can find that by, say, moving upstream further, or on a lake by being on the water early in the morning, or fishing around inflowing cool streams or springs. Conversely, when it's really cold you can often find warmer water.

Generally speaking (and everything that I say tonight is a generalisation, because if you fish for long enough you'll find exceptions) the other thing that trout like are water levels that are stable or rising. So, again, if you can find that it is going to help you. Trout generally don't like water that is receding on a river or a lake, because basically their world is shrinking and that makes them uncomfortable.



A rising Lake Eucumbene in October. Rising water is one of the things that's inclined to make trout comfortable and catchable.

We could simplify and say "find the food and you'll find the fish". Except for the few weeks in the year when they are involved in procreation, trout are preoccupied with food. Their daily mission is to make an energy profit, and being a predator that's not easy, because unlike herbivores predators can't store their food. Trout rely upon living or recently dead animals as their food. Peter Hayes in one of the columns in my FlyStream magazine recently wrote that, "If you find the food, I'll bet you the trout

have beaten you to it every time." Remember, we are talking about the elite here and elite trout are very good at finding food. So if you can find the food you will find the fish.

An important point though is that you've got to find 'available food'. I know it's great fun to turn over rocks and to get your little net out and shake it through the weeds to see the lovely lifeforms the trout eat. It's all very educational and interesting, but food hiding in weed and under rocks often isn't actually available to the trout. Mayfly nymphs, especially on lakes, tend to not be available to trout until they emerge. For nine months of the year they are hidden under rocks and are not really available to the trout unless there is a flood or a storm that dislodges them. And there's a lot of food that's like that, so if you want to see what the trout are eating you need to look rather than fiddle.

Look on the water surface, and look in the places where food is likely to concentrate, such as bubble lines on rivers, windward shores on lakes, and wind-lanes of course. And look into the water. Sit down, have a drink break, and just look. It's like one of those 3D images. At first you don't see anything, but if you look long enough you'll suddenly realise that there is all this stuff swimming around in the water.

The other day I was sitting on a rock on the side of a lake watching this life-and-death brawl between a Dobson fly larva and a mud-eye, which are probably two of the scariest things living in water if you happen to be less than an inch long. I can't tell you who won, because halfway through the battle a fish rose and I lost interest. But nevertheless, looking into the water, or seeing what's on the water, is a really useful way of working out what is available to the trout.

>>>



Find accessible food and the trout won't be far away.

Another interesting thing about trout food is that there is a risk/reward equation involved. In heavily populated streams, such as the headwaters of many of our north-east streams at the moment, the competition is very high, and to survive the trout there have to compete more recklessly for food. These are the fish that are easy to catch, and it is no coincidence that trout in the headwaters of the Tyenna in Tasmania are much easier to catch than those near where the river flows into the Derwent, because the competitive pressure is so much higher. They can't choose too carefully or they will starve, so the lesser of two evils for them is to feed aggressively at the risk of being hit harder by predators.

So food is interesting from a competitive pressure perspective. Where there are lots of fish and limited resources trout feed more often, harder, and more obviously. Where there are lower numbers of larger fish, such as in some of the remote Tassie western lakes and those trophy New Zealand rivers where the resources are fairly high per fish, they are more considered in their decision-making.

Now no Pinocchio show is going to be any good if we are leaning out over the

stage and revealing the strings. The puppeteer is wanting to suspend belief, so even though you know that he is there behind the curtain, you are soon sobbing at what's happening to poor Pinocchio because it's all so real and lifelike.

With trout we need to blend in. We mustn't stand out. That doesn't mean putting branches in your hat and crawling along on your belly with your face smeared with charcoal. But it does mean moving slowly. Avoid sudden or jerky movements, and don't wear bright colours. The photo on the screen shows Max standing waist deep in the Cobungra River hidden in the shadows. He is not invisible, but like the puppeteer behind the screen, the wild things kind of forget he is there. Blend in, stay below the horizon, stand beside bushes, use shadows, move slowly, and stop and look.



Try to blend in.

Here are a few points I think are really important. On lakes you must get your fly there fast. Lake trout are always moving, and this is a fundamental difference between lake trout and trout in

ivers. And lake trout, unlike river trout, are often quite hard to locate in terms of likely spots. It is much easier to read a stream than to read a lake for all sorts of reasons, so seeing a trout in a lake is doubly valuable because in all that water the trout could be anywhere.

Trout feeding on midge have very short focal lengths. They won't move far for food – just a few centimetres at best. They will not even see a fly that is a foot to either side, and for reasons best known to themselves, they will come up and take three or four midges and then disappear again.

So you've got a three or four second window to get your fly in front of them. You've got to get that fly there fast, and without five false casts. Now anybody can do this, but it takes some practice. It's one of the things that you do need to practice – the ability to cast fast and accurately. On lakes you must get your fly there with no false cast, or maybe just one.

The other thing that lake trout are often very particular about is the position the fly is in when you present it. Surface film is an important barrier, and it continually amazes me how important it is on lakes. And the position of your fly relative to the surface film is massively important to the fish. Are they seeing little pinpricks of light from a damsel fly or a spinner standing on the surface film? Or are they seeing the hull of a boat of an emerging insect such as a mayfly or midge emerger?

And what about that zone a few inches below the surface? A lot of our emerging insects swim quite comfortably until they get almost to the surface, and then they try to punch through it. Mayfly nymphs will have a few goes at trying to get through, so there is a congestion zone

about 6 inches below that surface film where food congregates. Midges are hopeless at it; they will have half a dozen tries. Trout think that this is all rather good. These bugs are trapped below the surface and they can just pick them off. Thus a fly that is a foot down can be too deep. So depth is really important.

And lake trout tend to have more resources available to them, so they tend therefore to be quite particular about depth. Keep this in mind - it is not just your fly, but where it is located.

I've got one word for you on streams, and that's the word 'drift'. In particular, 'dead drift'. The best way to describe dead drift is to imagine how your fly would behave if it was not attached to a line. Easily said, but not so easy to do. But again, it's achievable.



Don't underestimate the value of perfect 'dead drift' on streams.

I think we are all guilty of being too easy on ourselves when it comes to drift. "Ah look, it's almost travelling at the right speed. It's a tiny bit faster than the bubbles but it's nearly right. And it's >>>

right over near that far bank where all the trout will be. It's going a little bit too fast but they won't mind, will they?"

Well, that trout has just watched a thousand real bubbles and real twigs and real insects float past in a particular way at a particular speed, and suddenly there is this weird thing going a bit faster or slower. Of course they are going to notice. This is one occasion when we don't want our flies to stand out, at least in that way. One of my friends suggests that when trout see a fly behaving like that, they don't say, "Aha, that bit of food is behaving strangely!" Rather, they say: "Not food!" In other words, they simply dismiss it. So get your drift right. Yes, there's always going to be that trout that for whatever reason chases your skating fly, but you don't want to be catching only the outliers, you want to be catching the fish in the middle of the bell curve.

You've got to put your fly where the food is. On the pressured streams you are going to encounter over the next few months, when so many people are out fishing, the trout are going to be somewhat disturbed. So they're going to be right in under that bank. If your fly is not scraping that bank it won't get eaten. Don't kid yourself that near enough is good enough, because it's not. If your fly is a foot out from the bank on the Rubicon or the King Parrot Creek it's too far out.

And the currents against the bank are invariably slower compared to the currents further out in the river. There are two things that you can do to fish your fly effectively against that bank. The first is to do a sophisticated mend cast. You can throw slack line into your cast, or you can fish a really long leader so that it deliberately doesn't roll out straight. But the other thing that you can do is just walk over and stand right on the bank or

beside it so that you are standing in the same current that your fly is drifting in. That's just one example of what you can do to fix drift.

The same applies to nymphs. In particular, try to get your nymphs down near the bottom. Look for the tick, tick, tick ... which is your indicator transmitting the fact that your nymph, like most of the real nymphs, is tumbling down in among the slower slack water along the bottom. Of course fish will take nymphs mid-water, but more fish will take them if they are on the bottom.

Those of you have read my books and articles will know that I am compulsive obsessive about this next point. You might think that I've got over caring about losing big fish by now, but I haven't. I haven't broken a rod yet, but I've threatened to. No matter where I'm fishing, whether it be the Derwent River in Tasmania or the Steavenson here in Victoria, I think that anything can happen. If one 4 lb trout in my life takes my fly on the Steavenson I want to be ready. I know that most fish in the Steavenson River are not that big, but if that day ever comes, I want to be ready.



Expect the unexpected.

So I always carry a big net, I always have backing on my reel, and rather than

thinking how light a tippet I can get away with, I prefer to think how heavy I can get away with? Now I understand that you can't fish 20 lb tippet on the Steavenson, because your fly will look wrong, but you can probably fish 7 lb in a quality brand. And please buy the best brand that you can afford, because it is still going to be the cheapest bit of equipment that you have got.

Probably averaged out over the course of the year the most likely time of day to have really co-operative and active trout is at the change of light. And by change of light I mean from sunset until it is dark. It's dark when either you need a torch to tie your fly on or you can see stars in the sky. You may choose to be off the water at 7:00 pm and enjoy a drink and a nice meal. That's fine, but recognise that almost always that is costing you some very good fishing, and often the best fishing of the day. So make the choice by all means, but be aware of the cost. If you are having a tough trip and you're off the water before you see stars in the sky, then you like your food and wine a lot more than me.



Be on the water at change of light.

My brother and I will be away fishing just after Christmas, and I can tell you that our itinerary will be a 6:00 pm dinner and we will be back on the water by 7:00. We won't expect anything much to happen until about 8:00 pm, then from 8:00 to 9:00 pm it will all be happening.

Dawn is really good too, but I am not so excited about dawn because at this time of the year you can't do both. And while dawn is good, it's not as reliable as the evening.

Another good simple tip is, if in doubt, strike! Sometimes it is obvious that a trout has eaten your fly, but often it is not, particularly with wet flies. You think, "Was that a trout? Not quite sure." The default setting should always be – lift! And by lift I mean lift as if you are certain that it was a trout, because there is only one thing worse than not lifting, and that's that half-hearted attempt that gently pulls the fly right out of the fish's mouth. So if in doubt: "Was that a wave hitting the line? Was that my imagination? Was that the fly briefly bumping the bottom? I don't know, but I'm going to strike anyway." Back your judgement, because you'll be surprised at how often it is a trout, and sometimes a really big one.

There is no relationship at all between how much you feel or see when a fish takes your fly and how big and committed the fish is. A fish can be absolutely committed to eating your fly and come at you with a mouth the size of your hand and inhale the fly, and you'll barely know it. Why would you? There is nothing to create tension on your line. They tell me there is a French competition angler who can tell when a trout has taken the fly coming towards him because he can see the tension coming off his line. It's an interesting thought. Anyway, if in doubt - strike.

Guides. I'll try to talk about this with as little self-interest as possible. Guides are by no means the answer to everything, but what the good ones can do is develop your skills, because practical demonstration on the water is very hard to beat. And the other thing they can do, if you've got limited time in an

>>>

unfamiliar location, is put you onto fish, purely through the fact that they are out there every day and they know what's happening with their fishery. They know what the water levels are, and they know what the fish have been doing, and what they're likely to do the next day. So guides are useful.

But like any profession, there are good guides, average guides, and terrible guides. So choose wisely. Talk to people, and ask around. When you find a guide that sounds like he or she might be right for you, have a chat. Send an email. Get a sense of how you might match up. There are perfectly good guides that don't match with everyone because they might not be the right personality fit. Do you want a guide who is going to push you all day long? Or do you want a day with a bit of relaxation? Do you want to catch fish at any cost, or do you want to learn? Or do you want a bit of both? So think about what you want if you are going to invest in a guide, and work it out with the guide before you go out.



Guides can be useful, but you need to find one that suits you, and it helps if you discuss what you want from your guided day.

I talked earlier about the issue of whether the fish are there in the first place, so I thought tonight I might at least offer some

places where the trout population is likely to offer good fishing over coming months. We all love to predict and I'm as bad as anybody, but I try to be a realist. The main thing I can tell you now is where trout are likely to be in good numbers. What the weather is going to be in three months, what the actual water levels are going to be, whether there is going to be a hatch on a particular day – well, those things I can't tell you.

Here are some lakes that are my pick for the next few months: Newlyn, Hepburn, Moorabool, Fyans and Eucumbene. Be aware though that the first four of these lakes are not going to fish well when it's hot, and often it will be hot. These are all lakes that have very good populations of decent fish at the moment, and they are very likely to maintain those trout populations because of the high levels they are at now. You're going to need a bit of luck in avoiding the usual weather problems, but at least the fish are there.

When I was preparing this list I had the luxury of thinking that there are a lot of other possible candidates. But there's not much point in listing of every water in south-east Australia, so we will stick to the list above.

And Tasmania is the same. Tasmania has had several months with lots of water, which is basically 90% of what you want, and there is going to be good fishing in a lot of Tasmanian lakes over the next few months.

The stream options are even more numerous because a lot of them will continue to fish well through summer. My picks, besides many obvious favourites, are the following – the Murrundindi; the Barkly, which has got a lot of trout in it at the moment; likewise the upper Macalister and particularly the upper King. The Ovens River, from Bright upstream, is going to be very reliable right

through, too. If you don't mind rugged going and a lot of deep wading then the upper Buffalo system is looking very good. The Nariel Creek is well and truly back, and so too its upper tributary the Wheelers Creek. The Bundarra has got a lot of fish, and so, too, the upper Cobungra.



The humble Murrundindi is one of many streams worth considering this summer.

The Mitta above Joker Flat is also very promising. If we get enough cool weather then from Anglers Rest upstream will be well worth a look, but upstream is where the best numbers will be. The research from the Wild Trout Program has shown two things quite clearly. Through summer the greatest densities of trout tend to be in the upper reaches of the rivers, and radio tracked trout consistently move upstream when the heat is on.

The upper Indi (Murray Gates and above), the Murrumbidgee above Tantangara, and the Eucumbene River are all well worth a visit, too.

We recognise that Christmas and New Year and Easter and the January long weekend are all times when there are a lot of people on the water. So here are two tips to find good fishing when it's busy. One is to walk a kilometre from the nearest vehicle access point before you start fishing.

If you don't want to do that, then fish the hard bits. Fish the bits that everybody else is walking past because they're a bit overgrown or difficult to fish. The blackberries are a bit thick and you need to wade chest deep to get through. If everybody thinks like that except you, then you are going to get first crack at some fish that have been ignored. Trout love that sort of water.

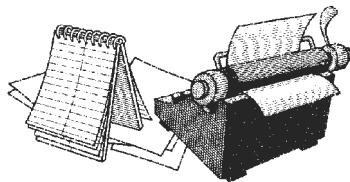
Finally, source good information. There's so much information out there now because anybody who wants to can talk to the world. Sadly, a lot of them are not qualified to do so, or have other agendas. So it has become harder than ever to find good information. What someone says on Facebook means nothing. You need to understand who is offering the information, what their credentials are, and whether they are worth listening to. I can't stress this enough – I see people time and again making really bad decisions about where they're going to go fishing based on poor information. So try to separate the wheat from the chaff in making decisions about where you are going to go. [For good reliable information check the blog on <http://flystream.com> - Editor!]

I'll finish up by saying, accept that fly fishing is not binary. It's not on/off, or right/wrong or black/white. It's got a lot of nuance. We would all like it if tonight I could produce what everybody agrees are the 10 best flies, or if I could name categorically the five best rivers to fish in the next two months. But I can't. Fly fishing has too many subtle differences and gradations, and we have to accept that. You can give guidance, you can have ideas, and you can have some good theories, but it's not a precise science.

Happy Christmas and a very fishy New Year. Thank you



From the EDITOR'S DESK



*"The first time I ever fished with Charles Ritz was on the Risle in Normandy in the spring of 1959... While we were fishing I kept noticing how measured his every motion was. He flicked his rod exactly as if it were a tack hammer and he was just lightly nailing something to the wall. ... The very lightest forward motion of his thumb, as he held the rod up as you'd hold an umbrella while waiting for a tardy bus, and – wish – the line shot forward like something launched from a crossbow, and travelled a country mile in the blink of an eye to a spot near the other bank where he had apparently detected a dimple that nobody else had noticed. The dimple exploded as a fat brown trout began chinning himself on Charlie's fly and splashing water for yards in all directions at once." (Arnold Gingrich, writing his introduction to *A Flyfisher's Life* by Charles Ritz.)*

*"Fly fishing is hardly ever as straightforward, or is consistently successful, as the picture most writing on the subject tends to paint. Writers can leave you with the impression they are city blocks ahead. That they regularly hook wagonloads of trout, and with maddening ease, have a giddy range of tricky techniques up their sleeves and complete mastery of them all. The truth is there's nobody out there who's fishing never grinds, whose touch never goes at times, who some days can't fathom trout any more than they could fathom an advanced equation in quantum mechanics." (Tom Sutcliffe, in *Hunting Trout – Angles and Anecdotes on Trout Fishing*.)*

Now there's a couple of intriguing quotes to start the year.

We are in the aftermath of Christmas, the time for giving gifts. I guess many of us, like me, have reached that stage of life when giving gifts, especially to our spouses, friends, children and grandchildren, is far more satisfying than receiving them.

Mind you, my dear wife gave me a beautiful present this year (which of course I paid for) – one of those fancy new Simms Sling Packs. I'm perpetually guilty of racing off up the river loaded with enough gear to fully equip our Australian international team for several weeks of competition. This sling pack is forcing me to be rather more circumspect and a whole lot less encumbered when I head off, and that's a good thing.

The VFFA received a nice gift this Christmas. Our newsletters seem to reach all sorts of interesting places, and one of our regular recipients is Ed Herbst, a fishing guide and prominent figure in South African fly fishing. Ed put together and posted to us a package containing several items. There were two books – Tom Sutcliffe's *Hunting Trout* (a truly delightful read from which I took the earlier quote), and a book by Tim Rolston on tying some of the flies used by South African fly fishers. Tim is also a fishing guide, and his book, *Guide Flies – Simple, Durable Flies that catch fish*, is also great value. Ed's package contained a double DVD, very professionally put together, showing South African fly tiers tying patterns that they use. The video footage of anglers using these flies on trout streams around Cape Town is quite

magnificent. Finally, Ed's package included two DVDs packed with a massive collection of articles on all aspects of fly fishing. These DVDs were 4 GB each, so the amount of material on each is truly huge.

So, our very sincere thanks to Ed for his very generous gift, which I shall pass to our president at the next council meeting. These materials will then come part of our library and available to all members.

I also received a book from the UK, which I shall also pass to our president. Another of our newsletter readers is Mark Bowler, editor of the very popular UK *Fly Fishing & Fly Tying* magazine. Mark has just completed and published a fly fishing manual, which is in fact a very comprehensive step-by-step guide to all aspects of fly fishing in the UK. It covers all the basics – the target fish and their key characteristics, the gear needed, casting, flies, stillwater fishing, river fishing, and so much else. It's a superb book with a fund of useful information and helpful suggestions. And trout are trout wherever they live, so nearly all that Mark writes is relevant to our trout fishing here. The book is entitled *Haynes Fly Fishing Manual*, and no doubt copies will be easy to locate and purchase. Alternatively, a copy will soon be available in our VFFA library. Again, many thanks to Mark for a very useful Christmas gift.

A delightful surprise and greatly appreciated personal Christmas present to me was an offer by journalist Rick Wallace, VFFA member and speaker at the 2015 Christmas Dinner, to help with the production of our monthly issues of *Fly Lines*. Rick was a great help in proof reading this February issue, and prepared the 'Fly of the Month' segment for us. Thank you Rick!

I'm not too sure who to thank for my final Christmas gift. Members who attended the Christmas dinner will recall that guest speaker Philip Weigall listed lakes and rivers that he thought were likely to provide great fishing in the coming months. Well, Philip was right on the money. Reports coming in indicate that many of the waters he listed are indeed fishing well.

Some examples: Rick Dobson and others have reported some fabulous fishing on the Goulburn just prior to Christmas and since then. The Ovens is fishing really well, and Trevor Stow at Bairnsdale reports that the Mitta is coming back to its best. Ray Brown, a VFFA member in Tasmania and renowned fly tier, reports that anglers including himself had been catching cricket scores from some of the northern Tasmanian Rivers. In one case one of Ray's friends caught and released 80 fish from one well-known river. Other Tassie reports suggest that many of the lakes are now firing, with Penstock the pick of them.

Bernard Holbery has been out and about with Jason Platts, and they've avoided the Christmas crowds by fishing at first light and at night. Bernard tells us there are plenty of juvenile hoppers around and it is only a matter of time before the trout notice them and serious hopper fishing commences. Bernard assures us the rivers are fishing extremely well if you pick the right time and study the weather charts looking for storms or anything that will produce a termite fall or a good hatch. "Rivers are dropping quickly so it's time to get out there and enjoy some good fishing."

There's a beaut Christmas present for us all. Let's get out and catch a few.

Tight lines and happy hopper fishing,
Lyndon

Vale – Peter McKean

Members will be sad to hear that Peter McKean, a member of the Association for many years, passed away last November. Peter lived in Launceston, Tasmania, and was well-known to members for, among other things, the magnificent cane rods that he built. Two of his close friends, Paul Squires and Andrew Braithwaite, have provided tributes to Peter's memory.

Paul Squires:

"The sport of angling used to be a genteel business, at least in the world of ideals, a world of ladies and gentlemen. These have been replaced by a new set of paradigms: the bum, the addict, and the maniac. I'm afraid that this says much about the times we live in. The fisherman now is one who defies society, who rips lips, who drains the pool, who takes no prisoners, who is not to be confused with the sissy with the creel and the bamboo rod." (from *The Longest Silence* by Thomas McGuane)

We met Peter McKean at his veterinary practice in late 2003 after he made me a bamboo rod – a 7', 4-weight, with a Payne 101 taper. Marty Rogers said I needed one.

Peter was an absolute gentleman, with a sharp wit. He was pleased that I had brought my wife Jenny along, as he preferred to not talk fishing. He sat on a chair outside his practice and entertained us.

Peter later went on to make two more rods for me, but I love fishing with the first rod, and I love fishing the small streams in Northern Tasmania with it. It was always fun to fish with him as he knew all the farmers with access to the Macquarie River. The nice ones that is; we always avoided the "pains".



Over the years we have communicated regularly as I have told him about our travels and fishing. When we went to England he asked me if I could get him one of those green trilby hats that they all wear shooting. I couldn't choose - so I bought him two!

He took great pleasure in getting onto the internet forums on bamboo rod making or fly fishing in Australia with the express purpose of straightening out those "newbie idiots". He took it on as a personal challenge, although I think it came down to his inability to sleep. He didn't suffer fools easily.

He very kindly used to refer to me as 'Lurch', so vis a vis he became 'Uncle Fester'. His wit was always his edge, and I have kept a lot of his emails in a file. I read them again before writing this tribute. He was very perceptive and astute.

Matthew 'Peter' McKean died peacefully at home on November 19, 2016

Andrew Braithwaite:

I first met Peter through his veterinary practice in Kings Meadows, Launceston. When my family moved to Tasmania more than thirty years ago we brought with us a much-loved German Shorthaired Pointer named Klara and a number of cats, all whom were part of the family. As with most pets, they needed regular and ongoing care and attention, and Peter provided this service.

I joined the Tasmanian Fly Fishers' Club some time after our arrival and it was here I made a second and ongoing contact with Peter – through our mutual love of fly fishing. Peter was a regular attendee at the monthly meetings, as was I, and over subsequent years I gained a significant insight into his personality and his deep love of fly fishing and fly tying. Indeed, he had a small fly tying room off to the side of his surgery, and often there was an unfinished fly in the vice, or some new material lying nearby, ready to be tested on the next fly he tied.

As I travelled a lot with my employment I was able to visit him for short periods prior to closing time on most days, and often found him sitting in the reception room waiting for any customers running late. My visits mostly prompted discussions on matters piscatorial, but we also frequently swapped ideas on current issues and world events. Peter had an opinion on all these topics, and I valued his opinions greatly.

Some years later Peter expressed an interest in fly rods and their actions, and from there, the building of fly rods. I became aware of this when he showed me his newest creation and asked me for my opinion on its action. At this point I had sold my only cane fly rod, a Turville

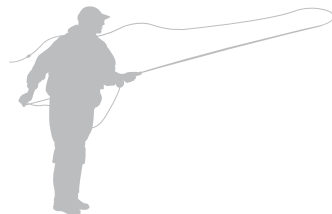
Victoria, many years earlier, and had little interest in cane, having moved into glass and then of course, graphite.

However I eventually acquired two of Peter's cane rods – a 4-weight rod named the "*Grasshopper Creek*" (named after David Scholes's beloved creek which I still fish to this day), and a 4 foot one piece rod, purpose built exclusively for the J.W. Young *Microdex* miniature reel to be part of the *Microdex Trophy* event, an event established and run out of Launceston some years ago. At his funeral service Peter was acknowledged as being among the top three cane rod makers in Australia – a tribute to his ability to turn his hand to most things of interest to him.

Peter became a firm friend of mine, and some years later, when I had four years out of the work force and was spending time at home, he visited me every Wednesday during this period to continue our discussions and friendship. Over a cup of tea we discussed many and varied events, and during this time I came to appreciate the extent of his vast fund of knowledge. In his later years Peter regularly called into my shop in Invermay and we continued our discussions. Suffice to say we enjoyed each other's company over many years.

His funeral service was attended by his many friends, both from within Tasmania and from interstate. He was much loved by friends and clients alike.

He is sadly missed.



VFFA Trips:

This year's Big River trip is scheduled for the weekend Friday March 24 to Sunday March 26. John Pilkington tells us that there are still some vacancies.

A Notice of Event form (NOE) for this weekend is included in this newsletter. Be assured that if you haven't attended one of these weekends then you should. The venue (Chateau Pilkington) at Enoch's Point is stunning, the surrounding Australian bush is exquisite, the Big River in this area is a crystal clear mountain stream well populated with trout, the accommodation is very comfortable and civilised, the food is delectable, and the cost is minimal (\$40).

To make your booking simply contact John Pilkington - by phone: 0407 356 676; or home on 9489 2186, or by email - jpilks@vicbar.com.au

At the end of April the trip to Bairnsdale for the annual Donger competition is scheduled. This is a particularly significant event this year – the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers are celebrating their 50 years with a special Anniversary Dinner on Friday, April 28. The VFFA has had a long and close association with the Bairnsdale Fly Fishers, and thus we are cordially invited to share the occasion with them. It would be great if this event was strongly supported by our members.

Following the dinner on the Friday night members of both clubs will be travelling to the Bairnsdale Club's Lodge near Omeo to compete in the Dudley Lee Donger competition, which is held on the rivers and streams around the Lodge.

More details and the NOE for this event will be included in next month's issue of *Fly Lines*.



Chateau Pilkington – a home away from home

Notice of Major Event (NOE) Big River, January 19, 2017

VFFA Major Event*: Weekend trip to Enochs Point on the Big River.

Event Co-ordinator (EC): John Pilkington, phone: 0407 356 676; 9489 2186(h)
Email: jpilks@vicbar.com.au

Event date: Friday March 24 to Sunday March 26, 2017. Arrive in the afternoon or earlier for some fishing. Huts will be open from around midday. Leave Sunday afternoon or stay on by arrangement.

Cost/s: \$40 for the weekend to cover food and extras.

Event location & address: At Enochs Country Club, Enochs Point on the Big River.

Travel directions: Maroondah Highway, turn off just before Eildon on Jamieson Road to Big River Bridge, then 14 km upstream to Enochs Point. Detailed directions available. Approximate travel time from Melbourne is 3 hours. About 180 kilometres.

Transport requirements: Four wheel drive vehicle is not necessary.

Accommodation: In huts, basic but comfortable. Bring sleeping bag, pillow slip, torch.

Catering/ food and drink requirements: Bring own food for BBQ on Friday night and breakfasts. Lunch and evening meals supplied. Cooking on open fire, oven. Bring esky for food, drinks. All cutlery, crockery, cooking equipment, etc, supplied.

Travel insurance: NA

Description of fishing areas: Fishing is in the Big River, a medium-sized fast flowing mountain stream with rapids, runs and pools. The river is easily accessible around Enoch's Point but more demanding (and productive) fishing is available by driving and walking down long spurs to the stream. Dry and wet fly fishing. Wading is essential. Maps are available. It is a remote area.

Weather: Usually settled at this time of year, and lowish river flow but can vary widely if recent rain. Forecasts will be obtained closer to the event.

Mobile phone coverage areas, or otherwise: No mobile phone coverage after Eildon turnoff (approximately one hour away from Enoch's Point).

How physically challenging: Varies from location to location - from easy to difficult.

Fishing license required: Victorian inland fishing licence required.

Strongly recommended personal equipment: Waders, wading boots, wading staff, gaiters if wet wading; brimmed hat; glasses/sunglasses, sunscreen; wet weather gear, warm clothing; UHF/VHF radio; torch; water and lunch food. PLB - especially in Remote Locations.

Essential equipment for Remote Locations: Compression bandage, UHF radio, any necessary prescribed medicines.

Guiding: NA

Event Registration Form (ERF): To be completed and returned to John Pilkington by April 13.

Date of issue of this NOE: As above – January 19, 2017 (mandatory for quoting in ERF)

Event Registration closing date: March 17, 2017

The event is limited to 16 participants and applications will be accepted on a first come, first in basis

[Please note – the Event Registration Form (ERF) can be downloaded from the VFFA website or obtained at the next VFFA general meeting]

A Tale of Two Andrews

... or, two different ways to fill a bag with fish.

(... by Andrew Mossman and Andrew Hood)

In late November of 2016 Andrew Hood and I had a wonderful day's fishing on the Mataura River in southern New Zealand. We both caught a bag of 11 fish, but both by quite different methods. We tell our stories to demonstrate that there are many ways "to skin a cat", despite releasing all the fish.

The day was cool to cold with a typically strong Southland sou'wester blowing, but the sun was shining. One might think not a great day for fishing, but then again cold windy conditions are common in Southland and to the Shakespearian question, "to fish or not to fish?" we replied, "what a silly question". So based on much experience we went fishing and had another wonderful day in poor conditions. Because of the wind we decided to go to a long riffle and some runs near Mandeville, some 15 km north of Gore, where willows and poplars might give some protection.

I was with Andrew Hood, an old friend from Tasmania with whom I have fished a great deal over the decades. Andrew is going through a 'spidering' period using a series of soft hackle flies that he ties. I, on the other hand, being obsessive and task oriented decided to concentrate on my belief that more fish can be caught in shallow water on dry flies. So Hood fished down and I fished up. To be fair, I too enjoy a little 'spidering' but normally these days only when unable to satisfy my obsessions.

With the exception of the first 100 metres of the long riffle that Hood and I shared I fished all of the remaining 300 to 400 hundred metres of it. Moving very

slowly and quietly I fished up in only the shallow water near the bank where the maximum depth would be thigh deep. Apart from the fish in the very shallow water that are rarely caught 'spidering', the fish further out are not normally disturbed.

Now don't forget we were fishing the Mataura, which here is almost 50 metres wide and where the near side is a shingle beach and a gently sloping bed, and the far side is water that is much deeper and swifter. Normally in these conditions I would see a number of fish in this shallow water, often quietly rising or nymphing in only 100 to 200 mm of water, and I would expect, or at least hope, to catch an odd one of them. However despite fishing carefully and quietly I saw only one fish and he vanished before I got close to him.

At the very top of this long riffle, and fishing only the very shallow water using a size 17 Parachute Adams, which I often use when nothing is happening, I had three rises. The first was missed, the second came off at the net and the third was not felt. Clearly I was having one of those days. Just above this riffle is a grassy bank that we call the 'Lunch Bank', where many fish have been caught over the years. Sadly recent floods have almost spoilt this run, but provided the river is high enough, odd fish can still be undone there.

On this occasion there was enough water, but it was not until I had fished to the top of this run, where it is impossible to go further, that a fish rose right under my rod tip. I saw the fish come up, take a



Andrew fishing up a shallow riffle on the wonderful Mataura

dun, and quietly sink down. The fish was not aware of my presence and I quietly backed off, downstream. I changed my fly to a No Hackle Possum Dun and the fish took it at the first good offer. This was a perfect example of the benefit of careful and quiet wading and being observant. My luck had changed and I nervously and very carefully landed a plump 1¼ lb fish. It was 3:00 pm and time for lunch, so I wandered back down to the riffle where Hood was fishing. He had six fish, all around 1½ lbs, and had lost several others. Hood was having a good day.

After lunch and an 'Old Fellow's Nap' Hood decided to continue 'spidering' the long riffle and I walked up several hundred metres to where I knew there were a couple of small runs. In the bottom run, a side riffle only 25 to 30

metres in length and only thigh deep, and despite the continuing gale, I saw a fish rise and caught it and three others on my No Hackle Possum Dun. When the fish rose I could see it clearly due to the sun light shining into the water from behind me.

I then saw another fish rise to and miss a spinner, a *Deleatidium Venale*. I quickly put on my standard spinner size 17 and caught that fish. I then had a couple of boofed and missed rises, so it was time for a change. I put on Hubert Reichelt's Mataura Red Spinner, also size 17. It was only marginally better, but I landed a couple more despite several misses, and others coming off after a good run or two or near the net.

Although the light was perfect and I could see the river bed clearly, I >>>



Connected – a typical Mataura brown being brought to the net

could not see the many fish that must have been lying close to it. It was only when they rose up through the water to take a fly that they were so clearly visible, despite my concentrated efforts to spot them. When they sank back to the bottom they just faded out of sight and blended into the environment.

Having fished to the top of the upper riffle I decided to spider back, so put on my Partridge and Ginger, and got a fish to the net where it also came off. I was still having one of those days. The upstream wind made spidering down almost impossible with the trees so close to the water at this point.

Back in the bottom riffle again odd fish were still rising, and I got two more, on spinners, but missed several or was unable to persuade them to rise. I left at 7:00 pm and in the top of the Lunch Bank water on the way back I got another of 1¼ lbs on a No Hackle Possum Dun. Back

near the car I had one missed rise, caught an 8 inch fish, and had another good fish come off just before I could net him.

Despite the heavy wind I had enjoyed a great day, catching 11 fine Mataura fish from 1¼ to 2 lbs, the majority between 1½ and 1¾ lbs. However it was a difficult and challenging day, with many misses and losses. Clearly my flies were nearly but not quite right. There was no evening rise.

Now over to Hood:

We both went in at the corner, and shared the first 100 metres. Neither of us saw a fish so I put on a spider, walked up a bit, and started fishing down towards Mossman. When we met in the middle, Andrew walked past me and started fishing the shallow water against the left bank, looking upstream.

I fairly quickly landed several fish, and also had several hits without hook-ups. Mostly they were out towards the middle



Andrew Hood fishing a very productive bank – this time fishing upstream

of the river in deeper water to about a metre in depth. Two or three were immediately upstream from prominent rocks in the river.

After Mossman had fished about half of the main riffle I walked up to where he was fishing and started spidering down. I did this again when he was near the top of the riffle, spidering down again.

Andrew continued to seek surface feeders along the near bank, and in the top water had some action. He then went up to the Lunch Bank. I had continued fishing the main riffle until Mossman returned for lunch at about three o'clock.

After lunch Andrew walked well up the river, so I fished the top water that I knew and am always keen to fish. This was only wadeable along the edge due to the greater depth, large slippery rocks and fast water, but it was quickly evident that there were plenty of fish lying in the seam of relatively quiet water alongside the

main flow. I fished this area two or three times in quick succession and continued to catch fish for another two or three of hours.

The spider patterns I used were mostly tied in sizes 12 to 16, with the smaller flies being every bit as successful as larger ones. I tried several different colour versions just to see if they differed in effectiveness. These included different combinations of dark hen, starling or partridge hackles, either natural or dyed green, and bodies of red, orange, green, purple or claret seals fur, all tied fairly sparsely.

I had also tied some small size 16 spiders with starling hackles and shiny red or bronze copper wire bodies, and these seemed to be every bit as effective as the other patterns, perhaps because they were a bit brighter when the sun was out or maybe they swam a little deeper due to the wire body.

>>>



The spoils of competition - browns like these are what it's all about.

I was fishing my spiders down and across and using a reasonably long line in order to cover as much water as possible with each cast. Although this method of fishing is not particularly demanding, it is essential that the line is mended upstream so that the fly swims properly and the line is straight rather than bellied by the current. This allows much more direct contact when the fish takes.

Sometimes the takes were quite savage with the fish just grabbing the fly and tearing off downstream, but at other times the take was more gentle, with just a quiet tightening as the weight of the fish was felt. There were many savage hits without the fish being hooked, but the more gentle takers always stayed connected.

We returned to this spot a few days later,

obviously hoping for a repeat performance, but although we still had good fishing, it wasn't the same. Andrew got his usual bag of fish on his various dry flies, but I only got a few on spiders though I did get some others on nymphs and a Parachute Adams.

So we both had another wonderful, though quite different, day on the Mataura. On the first day the fish took the spider freely, and for much of the day, but on the second day they were much more reticent and had apparently gone AWOL. It is hard to understand why this should be so, but I guess that's why we find fly fishing so challenging and enjoyable.

Andrew Mossman, VFFA

Andrew Hood, Tasmanian Fly Tiers Association

This Month's Yarn

(... adapted from May, 1959)

McTaggart pushed his glass across the bar for a third helping of lunch, and opined, "It's good to see that the VFFA has finally woken up to the fact that you can't hold the March meeting on the third Thursday of the month at the Celtic Club. It's too close to St Patrick's Day."

"Is that the case?" said Alf, with raised eyebrows. "I didn't think St Pat's Day would have much of a connection with trout fishing."

"Well," responded McTaggart, "That's not quite the case. Let me tell you about something that happened to an uncle of mine some time ago. He was a very keen fly fisher, and during autumn several years ago he camped for a few days on the banks of O'Flaherty's Creek. The creek ran through a property owned by Dinny Ryan, a friend his, and it flowed out of the hills up in the Kelly Country."

"The trout there were numerous, and strong fighters, and handsomely pigmented with a rather unusual green iridescence along their sides. Dinny, whose folk had lived in the district for

several generations, said the original trout stock had come from Ireland."

"For the first three days my uncle took a bag limit each day, mostly on an imitation of an orange-bodied beetle which were common in the area, and on which the trout were feeding ravenously. On the fourth morning, however, he went out in perfect weather, but by midday hadn't got a single rise. He wandered back to camp to boil the billy, and on meeting Dinny along the way expressed his total astonishment at his lack of success."

"What are you are trying to catch them on?" asked Dinny. Uncle pulled out his orange beetle. "To be sure, to be sure," commented his host, "You're a very foolish man. Don't you know what day it is?" Now my dear uncle tended to lose all sense of time and days when he's out camping, so he had to think for a minute. "It's about March the 16th or 17th isn't it?" he said. "Yes," roared Dinny, "It's March 17th. And if you think those good Irish fish are going to have a bar of anything orange on St Patrick's Day, it's time your education was attended to!"



Tichborne watercolour - Waiau River, New Zealand

Snowy Mountains In Spring

... by Trevor Stow

Each year Geoff Johnston and I head to the Snowy Mountains for a weekend of male bonding.

This year we chose to fish the Providence Portal area. We arrived on the Thursday night to reports of Lake Eucumbene dropping slightly and the fishing poor to very poor. We had a look at the Tantangara Tunnel and found it to be running full and putting a lot of water into Eucumbene.

The wind had been blowing from the north-west during the day, which meant that it was blowing towards the incoming Tantangara water. We reasoned that there would be food blowing into that shore from the wind and there would be food being washed into the lake from the tunnel. With this in mind we decided to fish the shore near the run in that evening.

By 7:30 pm the wind had dropped and it was a pleasant mild evening. We fished the lake with wet flies for the next hour. There was the odd fish rising and a few midges and caddis fluttering about. Our only success was when I dropped a small rainbow. Disappointing!

Next morning we headed to the Eucumbene River at about 8 o'clock, and found a lot of fishermen there, some having been there since dawn. Most of those we spoke to were getting a few fish. Geoff elected to fish above the bridge and I headed downstream. We both managed to find some clear water between the other anglers.

The river was flowing beautifully and the water temperature was a very acceptable 15°C. We both had success, firstly on beadhead nymphs, then later in the day on Royal Wulffs. The tally by mid-afternoon was 18 fish. Most were

rainbows, and most were between 1 and 2 lb. Geoff had caught the biggest, which was a little over 2 lb. We headed back to the Portal for a little Nanna Nap before returning to the river for the evening.

At that stage the fishermen had all left and we had the place to ourselves. We promptly added another 6 rainbows to our tally, all taken on dries. We were pleased with the day, having caught 23 fish. There were few fish rising during the evening, but they were prepared to poke their heads up in the ripples if a Royal Wulff drifted over them.

Next morning, which was Saturday, we decided that we had better make an early start as there was sure to be plenty of other fishermen about (judging by the number that we saw on the Friday). We arrived at the river at 6:00 am to find that we were the only two there. We fished until lunch time and only saw one other couple, who were nowhere near us anyhow.

Saturday was a glorious day. The temperature was in the low 20's, there was little wind, and we had the place to ourselves. Unfortunately the fishing was not as good as on the previous day. We ended up with nine fish, again mostly rainbows ranging from 1 to 2 lb, and nearly all on the Royal Wulff.

The river was just a delight to fish at the time. It was flowing at an ideal rate and the water was at a perfect temperature. We killed one trout and it was full of black beetles. We didn't see any beetles on the water or on the banks, but they must have been there somewhere, judging by the full stomach of the trout. There were lots of Snow Flake Caddis fluttering around during the day, and they caught the

attention of trout at times. Once the sun set, the caddis and midges disappeared and the fishing went dead. We spoke to a number of other anglers. Most were doing OK on the river, but those fishing the lake were faring badly. One father and son duo fly fished the lake for five days for just

one fish. Another fisherman trolled all Saturday for just one fish.

On the way home we fished the McLaughlin River where I was very fortunate and landed a beautiful brown of 5 lb, but that's another story.



VFFA Council member Dermot O'Brien fished the Mataura with your editor last November. They were fishing up near the Cattle Flat area when Dermot found two fish working a small backwater. He hooked and lost the first, but made no mistake with the second – a fine brown a touch under 4 lb. The fly of course was a size 16 Parachute Adams – so popular and successful on this river. Dermot loves fishing dry flies to sighted fish and revelled in his success on this occasion



It Has Changed Now, Surely ...

Poor Sportsmanship at Season Opening in 1962

(What was it like in the 'good old days', 50 years ago? Here is a report by Don Gillies, writing in *The Age*, Friday September 7, 1962)

The Australian sporting tradition of "a fair go" is in danger of extinction judging from the behavior of some trout fishermen at Eucumbene River last weekend.

The season opened at midnight on Friday. Between then and Sunday evening hundreds of spawning trout were lured to their doom; some with hooks, others caught by hand as they attempted to run up the trickles of water only inches deep.

Along the two-mile stretch of the Eucumbene River between the Providence Portal and the top bridge an almost shoulder-to-shoulder concentration of men and women worked on thousands of big trout, to 10 lb in size, which were engrossed in the important tasks involved in selecting their spawning partners.

Male fish were fighting savagely to keep other males away from their mates, before making their way upstream to suitable spawning areas to continue their love-making away from the showers of flying lead weights, baited hooks, spoon-flash lures and tangled lines.

The banks of the stream took on the appearance and odour of a slaughterhouse as the fish were cleaned and the offal and ripe spawn tossed either on the banks to dry in the hot sun or back into the stream to pollute the water. It is reliably reported that one of the "fish-hogs" carried away more than 100 trout to 9 lb, which he packed into the boot of a large car.

People who attempt to eat these spawners will find their flesh flabby and unpalatable; not to be compared with fish

from the local fish shop.

For the third season in succession, Lake Eucumbene heads the fishing reports for the opening of the trout season, though most of the trout were in poor condition.

Despite a drop of about 4 foot 6 inches in the water level at Lake Eucumbene and a remarkable fall in the average weight of fish (from 5¾ lb during the 1960 opening weekend down to 3¼ lb for the 1962 opening) the estimated hundreds of parties angling around the lake again recorded their catches by the hundredweight.

The Breakaway

At the Breakaway on the Goulburn River during the opening weekend, 21 members of the Ormond Anglers' Club enjoyed perfect weather and ideal conditions for bait fishing, which produced 36 trout, to 1½ lb, for a total weight of 23 lb.

Mr Peter Trott recorded the best catch—5 lb 2 oz of fish. Worm and mussel baits accounted for most of the catch.

Poor Catch

Operating from the pavilion at Launching Place on the Yarra River on Sunday, 40 members of the Victorian Anglers' Club weighed in only 17 trout of what was described as poor quality. Mr Trevor Nippres won the trophy with a catch of two trout, total weight 1 lb 8 oz, by a small margin from Mr Max Morris, who also scored two trout, but only totaling only 1 lb 3 oz.

"We had a much better catch of bream from the Werribee River yesterday, when Mr Les Dickie and I grassed 16 nice fat bream," said Mr Nippres.

'Time Flies' – the third VFFA book

Members are reminded that the third book in the trilogy of VFFA recent publications is *Time Flies*, which was released at last year's August Annual Dinner.

This book makes a very handsome edition to any book lovers library, and most particularly members of the VFFA.

Editor Rick Keam adds this note:

Time Flies: A Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association Fly Box 1932–2015 is an elegant production of 186 pages. There are 37 chapters describing over 60 flies. The flies, beautifully photographed by top Melbourne cameraman Vlad Bunyevich, are presented at angles that capture their individual distinctiveness. Wherever possible, the accompanying descriptions supply information and stories about their creators.

Even for members who don't tie their own flies, *Time Flies* will be a beautiful book to have and to hold, and a treasured memento of our own rich fly-fishing tradition.



Time Flies has been produced in two versions - a standard and a limited edition. Both books are hard case bound, the first in black Alb Buckram and the collectors' edition is bound in black Samala book cloth. The first book is printed on 120gsm Colotech paper and the collectors on 140gsm Silk.

Sales have been brisk, and many members have purchased a copy of this very attractive tome. But there are still some for sale, so members and non-members who haven't yet invested can still do so. Prices are \$70 and \$125.

What about a new rod?

Floating around among the pile of bits and pieces that your editor has accrued is a Price List for *The Compleat Angler* store, dated 1975.

How would you like a cane rod? Well *The Compleat Angler* was selling top of the range Pezon & Michel cane rods, imported from France, for \$250. These were the 'P.P.P. Series – the ultimate in perfection'. If that's a bit of a stretch, then the 'Supreme Series' rods, such as the 'Ritz 8'2" 4-weight, was a far more

manageable \$150. For the rest of us battlers perhaps we could get by with a 'Special Series – Normale' 8 foot 5-weight, selling for \$120.

Then again, if cane isn't your go, the latest Hardy Fibatube glass rods, specially made up by *The Compleat Angler*, were \$38.

Oh, for a return to those prices!

FLY OF THE MONTH

Greenwell's Glory – as tied and fished by Anton Trusk



Anton works at Rick Dobson's Aussie Angler store and is a very keen trout angler, although he confesses that he mainly fishes overseas, in countries that include Argentina, Alaska, Slovenia, and Croatia. But one of his favourite places is New Zealand's South Island.

His favourite South Island rivers are the Mary Burn and the Grey River. Anton prefers fishing to sighted fish and a size 16 parachute Greenwell's Glory, which he ties himself, has been a particularly successful fly for him. He fished New Zealand last November and averaged nine or ten fish per day.

Some of this success is down to a pattern that was first invented more than 160 years ago.

The Greenwell's Glory was the creation of Canon William Greenwell, who grew up fishing on the Browney River, a tiny tributary of the Wear River in Durham. Like many a fly design, it had its origin in what was a tough day on the water for its creator.

Greenwell was fishing the River Tweed in Scotland with fellow Durham Rangers fishing club members in May 1854 during a strong March Brown hatch that was

notable because the fish were taking another fly that he couldn't recognise.

"I caught some of them, and came to the conclusion that the best imitation would be the inside of a blackbird's wing, with a body of red and black hackle, tied with yellow silk," he explained in a letter to a friend in 1917.

Greenwell's envisaged imitation, tied to his specification by expert tier James Wright, was fished wet (not least because dry-fly fishing was in its infancy) and proved deadly on the trout of the Tweed, cementing its place in angling folklore.

"(The) next day I had a fine day's sport as I remember and going, on my return, to James Wright, he asked me what success I had had," Greenwell wrote in the letter to Sir Herbert Maxwell.

"I told him I had filled my creel. 'Why', he said 'but your creel holds 32lb'.

"'Yes' I said, 'but I have got my pockets full as well'.

"'Wonderful!' he said. 'With March Brown, no doubt.' 'No', I said 'Almost all on the new fly. Dress me another dozen for tomorrow'.

By 1932, as this note from A. Courtney Williams' Trout Flies – A Discussion and a dictionary shows, the Greenwell's Glory was widely recognised as an effective mayfly pattern.

"The Greenwell's Glory is without doubt one of my favourite flies. Its sheer simplicity and delicacy makes it, for me, an aesthetic delight. Not only does it look good but it takes fish prolifically in the right circumstances. It's also an extremely versatile pattern which, with a simple change of hook size, silk colour and variation in wax can successfully suggest virtually any ephemerid you would care to mention," it says.

Many variants of Greenwell's fly emerged over the years including versions that could be fished dry. The fly has been a mainstay of anglers' fly boxes in both Australia and New Zealand and even now retains a place in the arsenal of many a successful fly fisher.

To the list of variants we can add the parachute tied example supplied by Anton.

Materials needed:

Hook: Dry Fly sizes 10-16

Thread: Yellow 8/0 thread, 'waxed with Cobbler's Wax'. The ideal colour is yellow with just a touch of pale green. Some pattern descriptions suggest primrose as the colour for the thread and body.

Body: Tying thread

Rib: Fine Gold Wire

Tail: Coch-y-Bondhu Hackle fibres

Hackle: Coch-y-Bondhu Cock.

Wing Post: White calf tail or white polypropylene

>>>

Tying Procedure:

1. Run some thread along the shank from just behind the hook eye to just before the bend. Tie in the tail fibres and a short length of the fine gold ribbing wire.
2. Run the thread back and forward along the shank a couple of times to build up the body a little. Then wind the rib in, finishing and tying it off a short distance behind the eye.
3. The thread at this point should about one quarter to one third of the shank length from the eye. Tie in the wing post material at this point. Wind some turns in front of the post to hold it in a vertical position, then wind some turns a short distance up the post to strengthen it.
4. Strip some fibres off the hackle feather and tie it in so that the stem is tied in just behind the eye and then up the post about 2.0 mm.
5. Wind the hackle down the post with three or four turns, then tie off the hackle feather.
6. Finish the fly with a few turns with a whip finish tool, or a few half hitches and a drop of head cement.



Tichborne watercolour - Waiohine River, New Zealand



LIBRARY NEWS

A note from our librarian, Rick Dugina:

Very few members are using this valuable resource. I am looking for suggestions as to how it can be made more accessible.

Please contact me on mobile 0401 963 601 or via the email library@vffa.org.au

I am currently updating the database to bring in some great first editions. This will be displayed on the website soon. I am also reviewing the old rules around the lending criteria. We'll keep you posted.

V.F.F.A. ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has the following quality items for sale:

Book "The Country For An Angler" (the History of the VFFA)	\$70.00 each
Book "Geehi to Great Lake"	\$45.00 each
Book "Time Flies: A Victorian Fly Fishers' Association Fly Box 1932-2015."	\$70.00 each
Columbia Shirts.....	\$70.00 each
Polarfleece jacket with VFFA logo	\$40.00 each
Association ties (blue or maroon)	\$35.00 each
Wine glasses and whisky glasses inscribed with VFFA logo, set of 6	\$45.00 per set
Cloth badges.....	\$7.00 each
<i>The Australian Trout</i> by Jack Ritchie	\$20.00
V.F.F.A. car stickers.....	\$2.00 each

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

VALUED DONORS

The following made donations for the raffle at the 2016 Annual Dinner:

- Aussie Angler Tackle Outfitters • Armadale Angling • Australian Fishing Network
- Essential Fly Fisher Launceston • FlyLife Publishing • FlyFinz Fishing Tackle and Books • Gavin Hurley's Fly Fishing & Pro-Angler • J.M. Gillies Pty Ltd
- Mayfly Tackle Pty Ltd • Millbrook Lakes • Ray Brown Onkaparinga Flies
- Stevens Publishing Pty Ltd • The Flyfisher Tackle Store Melbourne
- Hook Up Bait & Tackle •

VFFA Meetings at the Celtic Club & other activities.

February 2017

- 6 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
11 - 17 Tasmanian Trip, staying at Hayes on Brumbys
Event Co-ordinator – Hamish Hughes
23 Thursday General Meeting – a lunchtime meeting – 12 noon in the Shamrock
Restaurant at the Celtic Club.
Guest Speaker: Rick Dobson, from Aussie Angler.

March 2017

- 23 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Andrew Mossman
27 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
24 – 26 Annual Big River trip

April 2017

- 14 – 16 Easter 2017
20 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: Antony Boliiancu, fishing guide at the Goulburn Valley
Fly Fishing Centre
24 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
28 Friday Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club's 50th Anniversary Dinner
29 – 30 Donger Weekend with Bairnsdale Fly Fishing Club

May 2017

- 18 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: TBC
22 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM

June 2017

- 4 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool commences
11 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool
15 Thursday General Meeting – 8:00 PM
Guest Speaker: TBC
18 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool
19 Monday Council Meeting - 7:30 PM
25 Sunday Sunday Casting at the Red Tag Pool