



# The Vice

## Newsletter of Tasmanian Fly Tyers' Club Inc.

Volume 7, Issue 1

Summer edition, February 2009

**Next Meeting** will be on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 8 PM at the Black Buffalo

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### (1) PRESIDENTS REPORT

Welcome everybody to the summer issue of The Vice. Dry fly time. The main highland lakes are all fishing well despite the low levels of Great Lake and Arthurs with members reporting good catches despite windy conditions.

The committee completed a submission on the Midlands Irrigation Scheme and continues to work with the AAT in protecting our interests. I know that members are much more interested in fishing than fishery politics but the future of our great fishery requires your input if we are to secure the best deal for the future. New guidelines for exclusive shack bookings have been compiled which will I hope be acceptable to all.

Congratulations to Brian McCullagh on his life membership. He has done a tremendous amount of work for the club and has certainly earned the highest recognition the club can offer.

The Macquarie fishing excursion was enjoyed by a small group who had a great time but only one fish due to low water levels Christmas drinks were enjoyed by about 20 people. Field trips coming up include Penstock, The Western Lakes and Lake Burbury. Thank you leaders for the work you put in to make these trips possible and enjoyable. We want our club to run on the basis of fun, fellowship and harmony so please get involved. Good fishing

Dry Fly Dave Hemmings

### Guess this Lake

The lake in the last issue was Lake Ball and there were no correct entries.

This lake is easy so be quick to email your guess to Peter Murphy <petermurphy@netspace.net.au> The first correct answer wins a \$30 gift voucher from the kind lads at the Fishing Connection.



The boys at Spot On fishing tackle have kindly provided the Club with 4 vouchers to the value of \$30 each for this year's 'Guess this lake' competition. I'm sure everyone will join with me in thanking the lads for this kind support, and continue to patronise Steve's shop.

### Next issue

The next issue of Vice will be out by the end of April with a deadline 19/04/09 for copy to John Smith [nib1943@iinet.net.au](mailto:nib1943@iinet.net.au) if you have ideas, articles or comments send them to John.

## (2) Members Profile Peter Trott

Trotty lobbed into Tasmania about 8 years ago from western Victoria. It is no exaggeration to say that Trotty has fish in his blood and an uncanny knack of knowing just how to catch them. He started fishing with his father at the ripe old age of 18 months from his pram.

After spending several years in Tassie sampling the aquatic species on offer, Trotty slipped over to WA for a few years where he plundered marine stocks off Perth showing great courage fishing the bombora reefs. But the lure of Tassie was too much so he has returned.

He is AC DC in that he has success in both Salt and fresh water.



Trotty fishes many different waters throughout the season with great successes in the nineteen lagoon area, Great Lake and Arthurs, but also enjoys the challenges of sea run trout in the Derwent and Huon early season. Trotty's favourite style of fishing is an equal draw between polaroiding in the western lakes and night fishing on Great Lake.

He loves to use three flies simultaneously at night on the Great Lake, consisting of a leech, muddler and a long tail minnow pattern such as a matuka or olive seals fur while varying the retrieve pending the conditions.

He will Polaroid all day then fish all night although he has been known to stop for a beer or two?

"I love the western lakes where my favourite fly is a blue blow fly pattern stolen from NZ waters with a few modifications." Peter covers a lot of ground and believes in covering a lot of water quickly to find feeding fish. Few of the old pensioners have any

chance of keeping up as Peter often covers 30 km in a day and more than half a dozen waters."

"The Great Lake on sunset and for a few hours after dark on a rocky shore is a great source of excitement. Fishing large dry and wet flies on a calm night with all your senses alive waiting for the huge take from a giant rainbow or a street fighting brown is as good as it gets. (better than sex) Yes some say that Pete can smell fish.

Trotty has a theory regarding flies suggesting that trout give you points for effort and will take anything that closely resembles what they are eating and the more flies you try to use the less fish you catch. His advice is stick to a very small selection of your favourites and work them hard, flies should be in most cases tied all rough and scruffy as the trout will be looking for 'bang for their buck' in terms of size of meal and protein on offer. Also Trotty says if you are not prepared to put the time in then don't expect many fish.

Pete is a real goer, he is a doer, he gets things done. On the work front he has worked extensively in both marine and freshwater systems and is currently the Fisheries Program Manager for the Asia Pacific region of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature working tirelessly to preserve world fish stocks for the future.

A committee member for several years and is now the shack manager. A real good club man, devoted husband of Sarah, and father of his biggest love – daughter Ella and their two Labradors Matuka and Kye.



Trotty

A young Member called Pete  
Fishes with real speedy feet  
So apt with a fly that many would fish die  
But he practices catch and release.

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### (3) One Dish Wonder

In the interests of preserving stocks here is a non fish recipe.

This recipe from the house of Ireland is a ripper! You can use what ever meat you like instead of Pork spare ribs and what ever vegetables you happen to have. It is the principle that counts, great taste only one pot to wash.

#### Ingredients

2	Pork spare ribs	per person
1	Potato	per person
2	Small onions	per person
4	Cauliflower	per person
1	Carrot, quartered.	per person
1	Small Swede, diced.	per person
1	Small Sweet potato, diced.	per person
4	table spoon Olive oil.	
1	table spoon Red wine vinegar / red wine / white wine.	
1	Cup Stock / Stock cube & water, whatever	

#### Method

Method Grease a baking dish and place all vegetables in it and add pepper & herbs to taste. Add oil, vinegar & stock.

Place a wire grill on top, then skewer pork ribs, one skewer each side, & place, rind side up on Top of grid, bake at 200 degrees c. for 30 min. then at 180°h for 30 min. Serve, onto plates, heat up the pan juices, thicken them, and use as gravy

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### (4) Activities

#### Reports

The October field trip to the Western lakes was cancelled as we could not find a leader to replace Trotty who was called overseas.

The October Field weekend on the Macquarie River was enjoyed by a smaller group than last year but a good time was had by all. The leader Craig Granquist caught the only fish and missed a couple. The river was low and there was not the huge hatch of red spinner we all dreamed about on the

relaxed night before action. Our President Dave after walking for miles and miles demonstrated great skill with sustained accurate casting to several large fish which eventually turned out to be tench. Thanks to Greg for all his work in ensuring a great weekend.

#### Activities before April

##### Field weekend Penstock

January 31, February 1 Leader Mark Aspinall

This was an excellent event last year with accommodation supplied by member shack owners. It provides a chance to get to know where when and how to catch the mighty Penstock fish. There have been some good reports this year.

**Western Lakes** February 7/8 Leader Peter Trott

Last years trip was to Lake Halkyard lead by Ashley Artis enjoyed by a small group prepared to walk the walk. Trotty went to the lakes just in from the 19 Lagoons. Again a great trip enjoyed by a few.

**Lake Burbury** March 7/8/9 Leader Peter Murphy

This is a magnificent lake and a great fishery when you get the right conditions and we are due to strike it right. Don't miss this one!

**Pig Roast** March 22 leader David Hemmings – venue to be decided

A chance for pork and fish at great location with friends lock it in.

## (5) Feature Article Mick Hall pays tribute to an international giant of flyfishing

Dave Hemmings got approval to reproduce this article about Alfred Ronalds

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Rick Keam

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If you read this article, please consider making a donation to the fund for the restoration of Alfred Ronalds' headstone, which is in urgent need of replacement

Time and hindsight can be harsh judges of flyfishing literature. Only a few works in any era survive beyond it to become cherished milestones of the sport's development. Sometimes they are valued for breakthroughs in knowledge and practice, sometimes for superb writing, presentation and appearance, and very occasionally for both. High on this most elite list is Alfred Ronalds' *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*.

Although this classic study was published in England in 1836, its importance reaches far beyond that place and era. Ronalds was decades ahead of his time, establishing paths that many of the greatest 20th century anglers would follow. He belongs to the world. As circumstances turn out, he also belongs especially to Australia.

### Family Background

Alfred Ronalds was born in 1802 in the London suburb of Highbury, the eleventh of twelve children of Francis Ronalds, a merchant with a very substantial warehouse. He died when Alfred was four. Alfred's eldest brother Francis, having left formal education at the age of 15, managed the warehouse for a while but left it to pursue knowledge in chemistry and the new science of electricity. Although Wheatstone and Cook are often credited with the invention of the telegraph in 1837, the honour lies with Francis, who in 1816 sent



messages through eight miles of wire arranged in his garden. He later became director and superintendent of the Kew Meteorological Observatory, and in 1870 was knighted for his contributions to science.

The fate of the family business is uncertain. All we know is that at 15, Alfred commenced an apprenticeship as an engraver, lithographer and copper plate printer.

Thirteen years later he moved to Staffordshire in the Midlands. In 1831 at Tixall he wed Margaret Bond, 17, from the nearby village of Draycotts. This marriage produced eight children, one of whom died in infancy.

### Days on the Blythe

During the years at Staffordshire, Alfred developed a passionate interest in flyfishing. There is nothing in his background that suggests why, so we must assume the usual coincidence of people and events, inclinations and opportunities. And, of course, a river ran through them.

The river Trent flows through Staffordshire, and near the little village of Uttoxeter is a tributary named the Blythe. Not far downstream lies another Trent

tributary, the Dove, made famous by Charles Cotton and Izaak Walton's fifth edition of *The Compleat Angler* (1676). In his fishing cottage on the bank of the Dove, Cotton-a leisured gentleman-breakfasted each morning on a glass of ale and a pipe of tobacco.

The Blythe was a special place for Alfred Ronalds. Like Cotton two centuries before, but with more scientific intentions, he built a small bankside fishing hut. Clad with heath, it was situated on the section of the Blythe near the site of the old Cresswell Rail Station.

The hut was designed to overhang a part of the river so that it could act as an observatory. The building was octagonal and contained only three windows, situated four feet or so above the river surface. The middle window commanded the view of a scour (fast run), and each of the other two a small eddy or whirlpool. The curtains had peep-holes, so that the observers and their movements could not be seen by the trout. The banks of the river had also been built up so that one could approach without scaring the river's inhabitants.

Over the next few years Alfred was often joined in his pursuit of observance by the Reverend Brown of Gratwich and by others who assisted in various experiments. The resulting collection of thoughts, observations and notes paved the way for the publication in 1836 of *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*. It set a standard that no other previous work or any later work of that century was able to match.

### Science and Art

*The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* is a serious and in many ways startlingly modern study of trout and grayling, their senses of hearing, sight, taste and smell, and the insect life in and around the river. It describes some 50 artificial flies each tied to represent a different natural, and presents 20 plates displaying around a hundred delicately hand-coloured illustrations of insects and their imitations. Many editions have appeared over the subsequent 160 years. Though only the earliest are hand-coloured, the 11th edition of 1913 is notable for another reason: it was offered in de luxe two-volume format, the second containing 48 actual artificial flies.

The achievement of the *Entomology* is all the more impressive in that Ronalds had not previously produced anything of a similar kind. His talent for experiment and observation, and as artist and artisan, seem to have been endowments shared by other members of his wider family. He was in all probability inspired by his horticulturalist uncle Hugh Ronalds,

who five years earlier had produced an elegant book on apples, superbly illustrated and hand-coloured by his daughter (Alfred's cousin) Elizabeth.

Acclaim for Alfred Ronalds and his book was immediate and long-lasting. To this day, it is regarded as one of the greatest advances in angling literature.

It was also financially rewarding. For some years it returned profits averaging £50 per annum, a handsome sum at that time.

### Lasting Status

In his own masterpiece *The Fishing in Print* (1974), Arnold Gingrich argues that Ronald's historic bridging of the science of entomology and the practice of fly fishing is inestimably important.

Charles Trench's *History of Angling* (1974) adds that Ronalds went beyond entomology to consider other relevant areas of science:

Ronalds was the first angling author to relate...the fish's vision [to] the phenomenon of refraction. Modern anglers with a scientific bent are familiar with the theory that the trout has a limited arc of vision through a 'window' in the surface, and that through refraction, he can in certain conditions see 'round the corner'. Ronalds explained all this with admirable diagrams.

Trench also notes that Ronalds was the first to describe diagrammatically the likely lies of trout in a stream, showing all its rocks, shoals, corners and currents. He wrote of the importance of bubble lines ('Such tracts as where a chain of bubbles or little floating objects indicate the course of the principal current') and described how trout often lie in back eddies under the cover of froth or 'beggar's balm', as it was known around Staffordshire in those days.

Vincent Marinaro's *In The Ring of the Rise* (1976) pinpoints Ronalds as the 'originator of a new race of angler-entomologists', reproducing his mathematically precise diagram of how refraction affects the view that fish and fly-fisher have of each other. Marinaro laments only that Ronalds did not live to see the era of the dry fly, as he would have extended his studies of the effects of refraction to the trout's vision of surface flies. He observes that:

Ronalds' remarkable book, an expensive collector's item now, is still much sought and desired. The book is scarce even though it went through at least a dozen printings and because each printing was very small,

not many of today's numerous fly fishermen will have the opportunity to see and study it, especially the early hand-painted editions.

Ernest Schwiebert's extensive commentary on Ronalds in his two-volume work *Trout* (1978) places him on a lofty pinnacle:

Alfred Ronalds is one of the principal milestones in the entire history of fly fishing; with his *Entomology*, the rational basis of the scientific method had reached angling in full flower. The graphic work is beautifully executed, and the copper plate lithography remains equal to most modern printing technology. Alfred Ronalds is the prototypical mixture of angler and aquatic biologist that would emerge again after mid-century, and continue to play a major role in fly-fishing theory.

### **The New World**

After publication of *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology*, Ronalds' life underwent many changes. By 1840 he listed his occupation as farmer. In 1844 the family moved to Dolgelly in North Wales, where for some time he was occupied in the production of trout flies. By 1846 they had moved to Brecon in South Wales, on the upper Usk, only to be followed by another shift to Cwmbach, Llanalwedd. At this time Ronalds set up as a full-time tackle maker and fly tier.

Tragedy was to follow. In 1847, two months after the birth of their son Hugh, Margaret died. In November 1848 Alfred and his six eldest children sailed for Melbourne, Australia on the *Lord Hungerford*. They arrived safely the following February. It was described as a good voyage with only three deaths being recorded among 180 passengers.

Why would a man with such a dedication to fly fishing for trout leave his beloved rivers in England?

The loss of his wife was undoubtedly the major influence. It was a bold move, especially when his family was still so young. However, an older brother Hugh had migrated to America in 1818. Alfred must have thought that Australia would be a fresh start, another New World, free from the enormous pollution generated by the uncontrolled industrial development of that era. The effluent from the steelmakers of the Midlands alone was enough to demolish its trout streams.

Melbourne was then only a town of 17,000. Although it boasted a number of substantial buildings, they were interspersed with crude timber shacks and the tent

cities of the new arrivals. It was a wild place and would remain so for a number of years. The Ronalds proceeded to the port town of Geelong, southwest of Melbourne, probably because it was considered a more suitable environment to raise a young family.

On March 26 1849 a notice appeared in the *Geelong Advertiser*:

#### ***Alfred Ronalds:***

*Draftsman, Engraver, and Copper-plate Printer,*

*Having brought with him the complete apparatus*

*for carrying on the above business, is now ready*

*to receive orders for Cards, Maps, Cheques & etc.*

In November 1849 Alfred married 32 year old Mary Ann Harlow, who had travelled to Australia on the same ship. Their marriage would produce another four children.

In August 1850, the Queen assented to British Parliamentary legislation granting the Port Phillip district, shortly renamed Victoria, independence from



New South Wales. When the news reached Melbourne in early November, the party lasted for days. A Port Melbourne publican galloped his coach over the new stone Princes Bridge and along Swanston Street blowing a trumpet and waving a Union Jack. Huge fires were lit, rockets and fireworks exploded over the skyline, and blazing tar barrels were sent rolling down Collins Street.

To mark the occasion of Royal Assent, Alfred Ronalds put his artistic and technical skills to effect by designing and striking a two-inch silver commemorative medal. As a patriotic business venture it was unsuccessful, but today it is of considerable historical and social interest.

### **Gold!**

Internationally, the smell of gold rather than silver was in the air. For 18 months the newspapers had reported huge gold finds in California. By early 1849 many hopefuls had already taken passage from Australia. Little did they know what they were leaving behind.

Early in 1851 Edward Hargraves returned from California. He now knew what gold country looked like. Remembering the area around Bathurst in New South Wales, he headed straight for it, later claiming responsibility for discovering payable deposits of gold.

Within days of the announcement, hundreds were setting out for the three-week trek.

Not to be outdone, Melbourne business leaders met and offered a reward for the discovery of a payable mine within 200 miles: unconfirmed rumours of Victorian gold had circulated for some time. When James Edmonds found gold at Clunes, announcing it in the Geelong Advertiser on June 7 1851, Victoria was gripped by the early symptoms of gold fever. On September 20 a former Californian digger named Cavanagh and his brother arrived in Geelong with gold to the value of £60, estimated to be worth \$470,000 today, and the exodus to the goldfields began.

By October, Ballarat alone had 10,000 diggers. The flow of Australians to America was reversed, and by 1855 there were over 5,000 Americans on the Victorian goldfields.

The promise of fortune also attracted Alfred Ronalds. Though now 50, he joined the flood of hopefuls on the diggings at Castlemaine, then Eaglehawk, Bendigo and Creswick, and finally settled in Ballarat. He appears to have become one of the great majority who made only

a minimal living from their meagre findings. Within 15 months of leaving Geelong he had again set up business as a printer.

### **The Ballarat Years**

In 1854 Ronalds purchased over six acres on what is now the southeast corner of Macarthur Street and Wendouree Parade, Ballarat, close to his home in Exeter Street. Here he started a successful market garden watered by a small outflow from Lake Wendouree, experimented with a wide range of trees, plants and flowers and supplied many to the Ballarat Botanical Gardens.

In 1858 he sold much of his printing equipment.

Two years later, he died suddenly of a stroke at the age of 58. He must have approved the final changes to the impending sixth (1862) edition of *The Fly-Fisher's Entomology* not long beforehand.

Within four years of his death, trout were introduced into Australia. Lake Wendouree received its first few stock in 1871. The lake remains an excellent fly fishing venue despite now being located in the middle of a regional city. It is fitting that Alfred Ronalds lies nearby. We can only speculate on what contribution he might have made had he lived longer.

In his too-short lifetime Ronalds had been a draftsman, engraver, copper plate printer, lithographer, surveyor, researcher, author, fishing tackle maker, fly tier, expert fly fisher, gold prospector, nurseryman and market gardener. He fathered twelve children from two marriages. Their many descendants have included farmers, florists, artists, a scientist or two, and appropriately, a smattering of anglers.

### **MARIA (RONALDS) SHANKLIN**

Alfred Ronalds taught his eldest daughter Maria (born 1832) the skills of the tier's art, and as a young girl back in Wales she had helped him produce classic salmon and trout flies. At 18 she married Robert Shanklin in Geelong. The couple moved from district to district before eventually settling in Maffra, Gippsland, in 1876.

We do not know whether her father actually tied any flies in Australia, although if he did he was probably the first to dress hook with feather. We do know that at some stage following her father's death, Maria again turned her hand to tying. Perhaps she was encouraged by the introduction of trout. In 1876 the President of the Ballarat Anglers Club obtained a sample of her

work for display to the members, praising them to the local press as 'most admired and much superior to the imported article'. In the same year, The Australasian reported that Maria's specially adapted fly patterns, designed to imitate local insects and other fish foods, were successful on Gippsland perch. The most effective of Maria's designs was named the Wennel. Its olive green back and pearly white underside was said to imitate a tadpole.

In 1880 Melbourne hosted an international exhibition at the new Exhibition Building. Maria entered a display of artificial flies for which she won a coveted medallion. The display was later placed in the Museum and was on show for many years. The medallion is now in the possession of her descendants, but the display of flies appears to have been lost. On her death in 1884, the Maffra Spectator noted that: 'She had the management at a very early age of her father's business as a manufacturer of artificial flies-both for Salmon and Trout-and which industry she has successfully floated in this district.'

Just as Alfred had contributed his energies to the new world of Australia, other family members migrated to New Zealand and America. After Maria Shanklin's death, one of her daughters Margaret Turpin with husband Arthur embarked for the USA. They became partners in a five-and-dime store established by a certain Mr Woolworth. Unfortunately they decided that this was an undignified way to make a living and sold their shareholding. They became involved with the promotion of world fairs and amusement parks and in 1919 established a park at Long Island in New York. It was destroyed by fire in 1936.

## RESTORATION APPEAL

Alfred Ronalds' headstone has deteriorated beyond repair in recent years and is now badly broken. It is in urgent need of replacement. In recognition of his legacy to fly fishing, the stone or site also deserves additional information and signage: at present it mentions only that he was the 'brother of Sir Francis Ronalds, inventor of the electric telegraph'. Details of what form this project might take are under discussion by a Victorian Fly-Fishers' Association subcommittee on which the Ronalds family is represented. Expressions of interest and support from the Australian and international fly fishing community will be warmly received.

Donations to the Alfred Ronalds Memorial Appeal should be directed to the Treasurer, VFFA, 16 Albert Street, Moonee Ponds 3039, Victoria, Australia. Any

surplus will go towards the establishment of an Alfred Ronalds memorial medal or prize, to be awarded where appropriate for outstanding publications in the field of fly fishing.

