



# Club Newsletter

November 2014

*Welcome to all,*

Newsletters have been a tad lean on the ground this year and this is something the committee would like to see remedied. It is hoped that we could at least issue newsletters quarterly but for this we need content! So we're calling all club members to dig deep and contribute to this worthy cause.

We all love to read about what others are doing whether it be a club trip you attended, a private trip of your own, a new piece of gear you've been trying, a new fly you've been tying, you're favourite stripping technique (I'm still talking about fishing here), a movie you've seen or maybe just a good joke. The newsletter is what we make it and we're a pretty good bunch of yobs so slap together a short story of your exploits, throw in a couple of pics and let's get cooking. :)

This newsletter we have several trip reports, a gear review and a movie review for your literary degustation. Thanks to Mark Drewett and Paul Goodey for their fine contributions.

## **Paul Arden Casting Days**

Paul Arden from Sexyloops is in town for the month of November and we have lined up a couple of days for him to (attempt) to improve our casting. The first day is on 15<sup>th</sup> Nov and is an MCI preparation day, a course designed specifically for CCIs looking to advance to MCI. The second day is a general casting workshop on 16<sup>th</sup> Nov and is open to all. Both workshops will be conducted at Currumbin Special School. Many thanks to Kylie for hosting us.

Cost will be around \$150 per day (final costing will be determined by numbers).

If you're interested in attending either of these days please contact myself at [stuart.jamieson@skymesh.com.au](mailto:stuart.jamieson@skymesh.com.au). Be quick as places are limited.

And finally, this year has seen some new faces attend our monthly meetings. The committee would like to formally welcome our new friends to our fraternity, we hope you enjoy a long, entertaining and fruitful stay.

Stu Jamieson  
Vice President

## **IMPORTANT DATES**

### **12 November 2014**

Club Meeting

### **15 November 2014**

Paul Arden MCI Prep  
Casting Day

### **16 November 2014**

Paul Arden General  
Casting Day

### **December 2014**

Hervey Bay Club Trip  
(Exact date TBA)

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## **TRIP REPORT: RANGITAIKI RIVER, NZ.**

JUNE 2014

By Stu Jamieson

Earlier in the year, during the June school break, I took my family to New Zealand for a holiday. We did our usual circuit around the North Island from Auckland to Waitomo Caves to the snow at Mt Ruapehu, back through Taupo to Rotorua and then onwards to Auckland again via Hobbiton in Matamata. The North Island is a great place for a family holiday as the drive between each attraction is no longer than 2 hours and with a 7yo in the car, 2 hours is about as long as any of us can bear.

We did this same holiday 2 years prior and all my fishing buddies were aghast that I went to NZ and didn't take a rod. This time, I meant to make amends.

Sure, everyone always thinks of the South Island when they think of fishing NZ, with it's legendary monster browns, but if this were going to come off, I would have to fish somewhere which was compatible with my non-fishing family.

Rotorua is a great tourist destination with an abundance of things to see and do so this would seem a good spot to leave my girls while I disappear for a couple of days fishing. I've never fished NZ before so I figure it would be prudent to employ the services of a guide. They're not cheap, however, so I gingerly advise my wife of the cost and plead for one day of guided fishing. She says, "why don't you take two days?" Oh.....alright.

So after a little internet research I book in with Simon Robertson from Rotorua Trout Safaris who is able to supply all the equipment (so I don't have to bring anything!) from his tackle room impressively stocked with Sage and Simms gear. Given that I was in the market for a new pair of waders, this was the perfect opportunity to check out what Simms had to offer.

So on Day 1 I leave the girls to their zoos and sights and Aquaducks and head out to the Rangitaiki River with Simon. This is the last few days before the river closes and will strictly be nymph fishing. So he ties on two tungsten beadheads and a trailing globug on a 9ft level leader and I make my first cast into an NZ stream. Cast. Mend. Mend. Mend. Pick up. Cast. Mend. Mend. And so on. Simon is surprised that we don't have a hook up within a few casts so we start moving upstream and after around half an hour I pick up my first NZ fish - a smallish rainbow around 25cm. It's not up to Simon's standard. He doesn't even want to take a photo of it and the fish slips away before I have the opportunity. We fish this part of the river a bit more but it seems bare so we hop in the car and move to another section.

The rod I'm using is a Sage XP 9' 6wt, a legacy Sage rod since discontinued. Simon tells me it's his favourite of the Sage rods. An easy casting stick perfectly suited to his clients as anyone can pick it up and get the feel of it very quickly. He laments the discontinuing of this rod and his inability to source more. He only has two left. After a very short time I've gotten into the swing of it and I'm casting with it quite well. I like it. I'm not greatly struggling swinging 3 flies off the end of it.



This is my first time with a guide and it feels strange at first. It's a bit like having your own porter or, dare I say, slave. As the client, I don't do anything except cast. Simon assembles the rod; he chooses the flies; he ties them on; he untangles the leader from the tree; he says, "cast there"; "no, not there; THERE!"; he unties my "wind knots". I find it uncomfortable actually. I keep wishing he'd pick up a rod and have a fish alongside me but he adamantly refuses my invitation. "The client fishes", he says. "The guide does not fish, he directs the client to the fish." Okay, well if those are the rules.....I resist the urge to call him "Tenzing". But I like Simon. He's very helpful; very patient; very focused on the job of finding me fish to cast at.

We try several other sections of river but we get no chew at all from the resident trout. Simon calls it "hard fishing".

It's an interesting term, "hard fishing". It's surely an oxymoron. Meandering up a picture postcard stream, making lazy casts to sighted fish or likely lies doesn't sound like "hard" anything! But I get Simon's meaning. But equally I'm not bothered by this lack of netted fish. I'm learning a lot from Simon in terms of reading the stream, leader construction, fly selection, spotting fish. And the backdrop to these fishing locations are just stunning. And Simon is a great guy to share such beautiful locales with. Fish or no fish, this is a fabulous day out!

But Simon is my guide. I've paid for his services and he feels obliged to show me fish. And this is not happening. I feel that as the afternoon stretches on he's becoming a little despondent about the fact that, with the one small exception at the start of the day, I haven't caught anything. Or maybe he's despondent because I broke his favourite rod.....

Yes, it's true. Shortly after lunch I slipped in the stream and fell on my rod hand. I didn't think I'd belted the rod on the rocks at all when I fell but on the very next cast Simon's beloved stick snaps at the handle. I feel shit about it and can't apologise enough. Simon duly tells me it's no big deal, Sage will (of course) replace it.

So here we are, driving to the location of last resort at the tail end of the day with no fish and a broken rod. I tell myself it's still been a fabulous day out; which is true, despite our misfortunes, it has been!

We arrive at what will be our final location for the day. The shadows are growing long, we have about an hours worth of fishing left. Simon decides to change things up a bit and removes the globug in favour of a Royal Coachman. I cast into the bubble line drifting through the middle of the pool, dead drift to the hang, strip, strip, STRIKE!

It's not a monster. Quite the opposite, actually. A tiny rainbow snacked on the coachman. At all of 5 inches, Simon refuses again to take a photo - it's bad for business. I take the picture anyway and we return the tyke to the water.

I cast once more into the bubble line seeking Baby Rainbow's daddy. STRIKE! It's not Big Daddy. It's another tiny rainbow and he gets away before I land him. It's nothing lost.



We move upstream a little where there's a small drop-off in the stream before it runs quickly a short way into the kindergarten pool I've just fished. The light is fading rapidly



now and we allow ourselves half a dozen casts or so before we call it a day. We're both tired; we ought to be getting on home but.....

I cast above the drop-off. Drift, drift, mend, drift, drift. Pick up. Recast above the drop-off. Drift, drift, mend, drift, indicator disappears! STRIKE! IT'S ON!!

It's immediately apparent by the tug on the line that this is no youngster. And then the fish leaps out of the water, head shaking from side to side. It's a rainbow jack. Suddenly Simon is very excited! I don't have time to be excited, my mind on the job. Jack bolts downstream, heading for the driftwood snags accumulated at the head the kindergarten pool. With gritted teeth I hold him to the near bank away from the wood, willing the tippet not to break. It doesn't. Simon gets the net to him and the battle is won. Simon is over the moon. I'm quite pleased myself in my own understated way. (I'm backflipping on the inside.)

It's a fine fish. Great condition. Simon is beside himself because it's as good a specimen as you'll find in this river. After an almost fishless day, and literally on the second or third last cast of the day, in fading light, the Rangitaiki River delivers the best quarry it can offer. After a photo (Simon doesn't protest this time), we release Jack to his home and call it a day amidst sighs of satisfaction.



We knock back a beer as we pack up our gear. The spectacular end to the day gives us licence to joke about the broken rod and the day's "hard fishing". The trans-Tasman sledging flows freely. It's been a great day. All is right in the world.

Day 2 and it's been raining overnight so we spend some time touring some of the smaller streams running into the Rangitaiki looking for a stream with favourable water levels. We settle on one and we suit up. Simon presents me with his last remaining XP. I guess he really wasn't concerned about me breaking the previous one. He says I was casting well with the previous XP yesterday so best to stick with it. I appreciate the gesture and the vote of confidence.



We hit the stream and I land a nice brown on the first cast into the pool. This bodes well. I can see the fish darting around in the pool before me, feeding. A few casts later and I bag a nice rainbow. Another few casts and I'm hooked into another brown but he bolts downstream towards me. He catches me off guard and I don't strip fast enough. Slack line. He's gone. I don't mind. There will be no "hard fishing" today.

In all, I land about a dozen fish throughout the day - it's such a good day, I stop counting.

Unlike yesterday, the fish are exactly where they ought to be and a quality cast snags the bounty each time. It's a good confidence building day.

Late afternoon and it starts pissing rain. Simon heads back to the car to get some rain jackets while I cast in behind an overhanging tree where we saw a fish earlier in the day and BANG! he's on straight away. It's a rainbow approaching the size of Jack from yesterday. Two good fish to round out each day. What could be better?

Well, three good fish, I suppose, but I'm not complaining.

# TRIP REPORT: ROMPIN, MALAYSIA

SEPTEMBER 2014

By Mark Drewett

In Sept Jon Burgess, Gavin Platz and myself headed off to Singapore to meet up with Ryan Bacher who lives there, on our way to Kuala Rompin on the east coast of Malaysia to chase Sailfish.

Thanks to Scoot Air we had an extra day to kill in Singapore and were treated to Ryan's wonderful hospitality.

He lives in a very nice exclusive resort complex at Marina 1 on Sentosa Island Singapore but the upmarket atmosphere did not stop unnamed travellers from having casting practice in the pool in the wee small hours with another traveller thrashing around in the pool as the fish, putting plenty of drag on the angler...a sign of things to come.

The trip was well organised, we were picked up from Ryan's and driven across the Straights to Malaysia where the driving activities of the locals kept us awake.



Accommodation was good ...if you like wet bath rooms... and the food was fantastic. Did I mention the beer??

I won't go into all the details as most of you have been subjected to it at the meeting, I will just say it should be on everyone's bucket list.

We were soon on the water , 2 anglers to a boat which was good as it gave you time between casts to settle the nerves as it was frantic when you were up. We fished 12 wt and used the popper set up they provide on the boat which was tried and proved. On day 3 Jon and I were feeling confident and about to have a crack at them with our 10wts till I foul hooked one and spent over 45 mins on a 12wt having my arms lengthened trying to stop it.

You do not need the casting skills of a Burgess or a Platz just some luck as you put a medium size popper to them as they are teased to the back of the boat. Timing your strike right as they swim away is probably the trickiest part and then hang on, 200 mtr runs are the norm!! I have spent many seasons game fishing the reef up north and I would put this up there as some of the most exciting fishing I have done, the speed of these things is incredible to see.





We had 3 days on the water and did a lot of miles but we all caught fish and had a ball. It's a lot of travelling to get there but something I will do again. Thanks to Jon, Gav and Ryan for a great time. I promise next trip I will find a bar with beer . Christmas Island ..here we come.



## FILM REVIEW: HATCH

By Stu Jamieson

After achieving notable success in distilling the essence of great trout fishing in the finest locations across the globe with their Source films, Gin Clear turn their attention to fish behaviour in their next trilogy of films: *Hatch*, *Predator* and *Leviathan*.

*Hatch* represents the pinnacle of Gin Clear's achievements thus far and, in the stable of their existing work, this is saying something! The wonderful footage of predatorial trout shown in *Predator* applies tenfold here – truly images worthy of a David Attenborough documentary. All our greatest fishing moments are captured: trout taking duns on the wing; oh so gently supping spent spinners; patiently stalking potential prey; seductively nuzzling suspect quarry before - rather infuriatingly - rejecting it outright - it's all here, richly presented in gorgeous detail.

Part fishing adventure, part feeding habit thesis, *Hatch* is as entertaining as it is informative and the wonders of nature bleed into every frame. Once again the Gin Clear crew are joined on their adventures with an array of characters who are both informative and passionate; just the kind of guys you'd like to share a river with.

If there's a criticism, it's in the final chapter documenting trevally feeding on krill. This segment is covered rather superficially compared to the rest of the film but it's a forgivable trespass; how would one film such tiny creatures as krill being preyed upon anyway. Ultimately, I guess the segment is included for completeness.



And the presentation would certainly benefit from a Blu-ray release but as far as DVD goes, this is the goods.

Without a doubt Gin Clear's pinnacle achievement thus far, *Hatch* is also a pinnacle achievement for flyfishing films generally. It raises the benchmark for other production houses to follow and as a document of fish feeding behaviour it is without peer.

Scorewise, *Hatch* is worthy recipient of the full **5 Kriegers**.



# TRIP REPORT: DUBLIN, IRELAND

OCTOBER 2014

By Paul Goodey



## RIVER FISHING AND BEER TASTING IN AND AROUND DUBLIN

The family had been visited over in England, lots of good cheer and old friends re-acquainted, all as if I had never been away. That's the good and bad thing about returning to England nothing really changes very much still got the best old pubs in the world, lovely countryside and lots of historic buildings, loads of character, cobble stone streets and thatched cottages take you back in time, the cities on the other hand where most have to live near for work are pretty grim on the whole.

We decided to go to Ireland for a five day break and stay in the fine city of Dublin, we stayed in the oldest hotel in the city and it was a grand old building. It was almost like looking around parts of England whilst getting around Dublin, all the fine old buildings built by the English back in the day. We visited an area called Temple Bar District as you walk the old cobble stone streets the Irish pubs greet you with the sounds of the fiddle playing, raucous laughter and it starts around lunchtime and carries on into the wee hours, fantastic atmosphere and great trying out some of the Irish ales, obviously Guinness was a favourite but by far one of the nicest beers I have ever tasted was the O'Hara's Irish red craft brewed in Ireland. If you ever get a chance, it is to die for! Other really good ales worth trying are Smithwicks red ale, and normal ale, most are smooth and easy to drink and give you a kick when you least expect!!







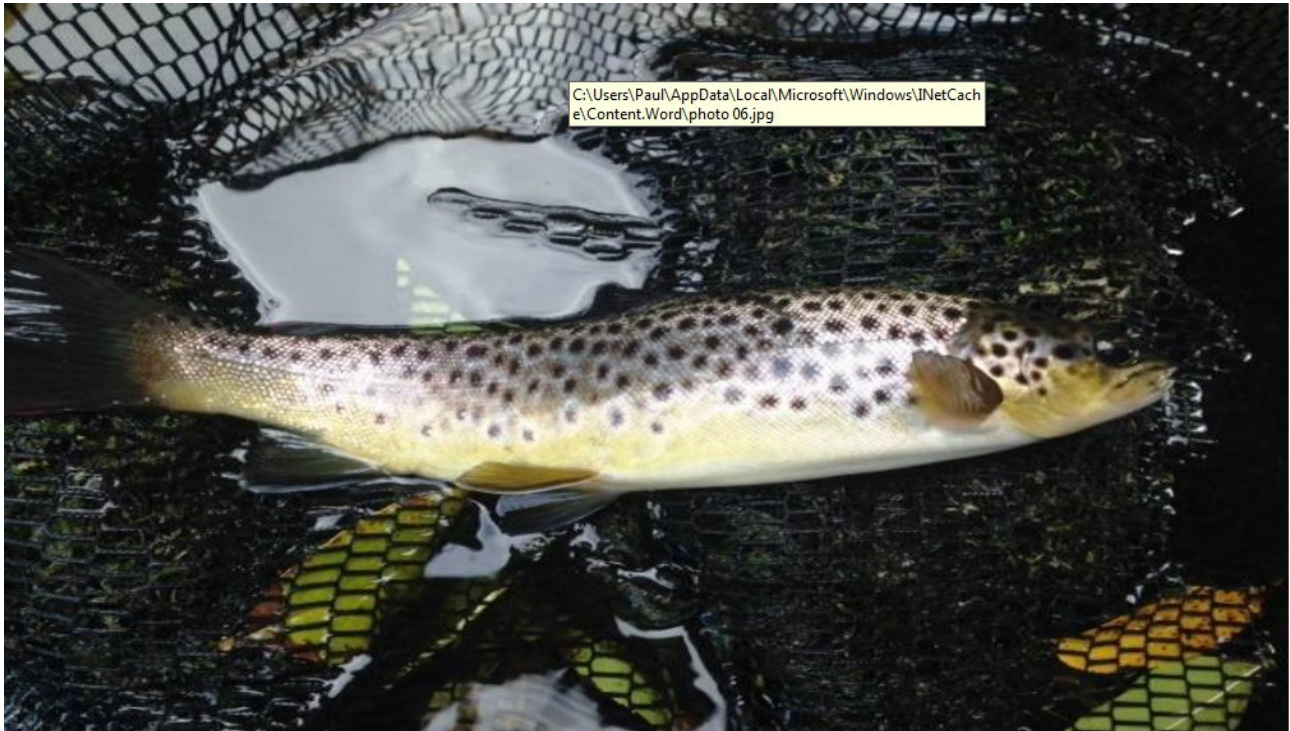
After getting round Dublin and seeing the sights, boat rides on the river Liffey which flows right through the city, drinking fine ales and Guinness pies, fish pies, shopping - I can only do shopping for so long, so I headed off to find a fishing tackle shop which just happened to be in the Temple Bar area!!

So to kill two birds with one stone, couple of fine ales and into Rory's tackle shop, after a good look round for thirty minutes!! I bought a few flyting bits and some light tippet, I asked about the fishing and the where and hows. I had a day at my disposal and was dying to do some river fishing for wild trout, everything was a bit far away for public transport so I decided to call Pat. He was about an hour outside of Dublin and he came to pick me up and travel an hour back to a place called Kells where we fished the river Blackwater. As most fly fishers know, the anticipation of fishing a new venue is electric and I got to do some long awaited river fishing.

Pat was a really nice bloke, good humoured and easy going, I learnt a lot from him fishing close quarters whilst wading, fishing areas thoroughly whilst keeping on the move. The trout were feeding on the shrimp and midges. I caught over twelve Wild brown trout through the day on dry flies and nymphing; smallish fish but absolute gems, beautiful colouring, and all in some picturesque scenery.

On the drive back to Dublin we stopped at one of his local pubs which resembled someone's lounge room, and had some more ales from the gods!

From memory it cost me about \$150.00 for the day which included lunch and travel which I thought was great value and a much needed fly fishing session in the countryside away from the noise and bustle of the city.





# TACKLE REVIEW: SIMMS SLING PACKS

By Paul Goodey



I have always struggled with backpacks when walking rivers and lakes either uncomfortable cumbersome and sometimes backbreaking, a bum bag is fine for very short sessions where you don't need a lot of gear, I saw Stu wearing the smaller of the packs and was really impressed with the compactness and comfort whilst wearing it actually fishing and forgetting you have a pack on, I got on to Duncan at Fish-Head and ordered the large sling pack, a bit more storage, anyone who has fished with me knows I eat quite a lot when fishing so hence more room for food as well as fly boxes, tippet holders and camera gear, they have a neat work station set up just unclip the cross belt and the pack can be slid to the front of your body to access the station, tippet holder and flies easily at hand, no sorting through packs looking for scissors etc. I have used the pack for the last three months and have found that I can walk and fish comfortably without removing it every time I stop to cast or look at fish, my tackle is well organised now!! Everything at hand, best bit of fly fishing luggage ever purchased. Obviously the overseas prices come up cheaper than our own stores. Not so - Duncan matched and beat the price once you include overseas loading for postage. There are two sling packs to choose from check out [Simms' website](#) for more details.



# TRIP REPORT: LAKE CRACKENBACK

OCTOBER 2014

By Stu Jamieson

Earlier in the year at one of Peter Morse's casting clinics at Lake Keepit in Tamworth, Morsie told us about another casting/fishing clinic which takes place at Lake Crackenback near Thredbo in early October - the opening weekend of trout season. The prospect sounded marvellous to we three - myself, associate club member Jason Stratford and our mutual friend John. From that point we set about planning our trip to "Crackers" as our major fishing trip of the year.

Lake Crackenback Resort is situated between Jindabyne and Thredbo in the Snowy Mountains. Activate Manager, avid flyfisher and CCI, Matt Tripet, organises this annual event in concert with MCI Peter Morse, a rounded day and a half course on casting, rigging and fishing for trout on the adjacent Thredbo River.

In the intervening months our party doubles in size: aside from myself, Jason and John, we have accumulated my father, Jim; Jason's wife (and also associate member), Sharon; and John's wife, Jane, who will be accompanying us exclusively for the extensive resort facilities (and the fine company, of course!)

My journey will begin on a Wednesday with a two and a half day road trip starting at Brisbane, through Lismore to pick up Jim, and onward for a sleepover at Jason and Sharon's place at Tamworth. The following day sees us driving to Molong for a nutritious gelati lunch and to stock up on Camel Balls (they're sweets, y'know?) and onward to John and Jane's place at Canberra. After another sleepover we make the final few hours' drive to arrive at Lake Crackenback in time for an afternoon fishing session on Friday. I catch two tiny rainbows in the lake and nobody else catches anything. Shame about that, but I don't care; victory is sweet. A victory further sweetened by catching the first fish on Jason's brand new 4wt - there are few sweeter things in life than christening someone else's rod and I christened someone else's rod!

An essential ingredient to any of our fishing trips is single malt whisky and this trip is no exception. For this outing we have assembled an array of 12 whiskies which we duly sample the night before we head to Crackers. This is purely to ensure that each bottle is worthy of transportation to our final destination, you understand? After all, there's no sense in wasting fuel consumption on transporting substandard scotch and besides, the more we drink before we leave, the lighter our travelling load and, again, the more efficient our fuel consumption - it's a win/win, really. My constitution the following morning has me questioning the previous night's wisdom, however, but we do uncover some truly awful tipples that would be best left behind. We take the crap whiskies with us anyway, though, because every bottle deserves a second chance, right?



Every trip we adopt a signature game to play while we while away the nights. Past years have seen the ever-reliable 500's and [Quoridor](#) but this year we mix it up with [Pass the Pigs](#). A twoUp style game using pigs as dice which seems to get funner with each Glencairn glass of whisky. And with each succeeding glass, we seem to care less and less about who's winning.

The weekend proper kicks off on Friday night with a lovely dinner (pork belly and prawn) hosted by Matt and Morsie. The course participants sound off one by one with a brief introduction of themselves and a funny fishing story. It's a nice jovial start to the weekend and is followed by a lecture from Morsie on the basics of fishing with flies - types of flies, nymph presentation, entomology, types of fly gear etc. - with specific local knowledge input from Matt. Photographer, Dave Anderson, is also present to document the event for an upcoming issue of Flylife Magazine.

After an enjoyable, entertaining dinner, it's Piggies, whisky and, eventually, Bed.

Saturday gets us into the practical stuff with Morsie running us through leader construction. This is followed by a casting clinic to tighten up our technique. And then after lunch sees us tying our own leaders before heading to the Thredbo River to put our knowledge into practice after some instruction on reading water and presentation techniques. Matt upturns a couple of rocks from the river so that we can see the critters our flies mean to imitate which is instructive.

Swollen with snow melt, the Thredbo river runs fast and certainly tests our presentation skills. Mending the line to maintain a dead drift in the rapid, conflicting currents is a challenging prospect to say the least. My brand new wading staff also gets a good work out in the fast flow and I'm thankful for it.

After spending some time practising on the river we all head back to the dam for a fish before dinner. The fish are initially quiet but as the sun recedes they're coaxed into biting and the first fish is caught by Jason. Dave siezes a valuable photo opportunity for his Flylife article – husband and wife, Jason and Sharon, fish in hand, the happy couple, the *fishing* couple, club members, stars in the making. Look for it in Flylife folks!

John also hooks in as do a couple of others attending the course. I don't catch a fish but I'm not bitter. While these fish may be bigger than mine they're not the *first* fish. It's the *first* fish that counts. Leading is better than following. I'm not bitter.

I'm not bitter!

After dinner (barramundi) it's scotch 'o' clock again and we invite fellow malt mate, Matt Tripet, back to our place for a few scotches. It turns out that Matt is a childhood aficionado of Pass the Piggies so we crack off a few games over a few whiskies to round out the night and a fun day.

The wind picks up overnight and by Sunday morning it's beginning to howl. No problem, today's lesson will be about casting with wind. We spend the morning practising various windcheating casts and tactics, as well as some spey casting, double hauling and, well, anything else that we'd like Morsie and Matt to help us with. The workshop formally finishes at lunch time but it's testament to Matt and Morsie's passion that they stick around for the afternoon and continue to help those of us who need it (which is all of us). It's a pleasant afternoon of tuition, advice and friendly chat. Morsie and Matt are nice guys.





*From left: Matt Tripet (CCI), associate members Jason and Sharon Stratford, vice president Stu Jamieson, Peter Morse (MCI)*

Photographer, Dave Anderson, also finds time to impart some wisdom of his own. In recognition of the principle that the quality of the cast is less important than how you look doing it, he introduced us to the "hero" cast - the cast you perform when someone is watching. A most useful cast, especially before observers of the opposite gender because it's guaranteed to get you more sex. We each set about practising this cast over the coming days in moments of fishlessness which, in the prevailing gale force conditions, were plenty. There are a few elements which comprise the hero cast but none are more important than the final presentation which looks something like this:



A video of my (albeit) amateurish attempt at the cast can be found [here](#).



Some in our party took their practise of this manoeuvre to new levels, even so far as to practise it over breakfast. Here John is awarded extra points for his exemplary "jazz hands" as he nails a sausage. Nice work Johnno. Go hard, son! (Jim looks on with mock indifference - he's actually amazed and couldn't stop talking about it afterwards.)



By Saturday's end we farewell Matt and Morsie and look forward to the next couple of days which we had set aside for fishing.....as the wind continues to howl.

We organise our own dinner in our excellently equipped self-contained apartment and then it's scotch 'o' clock (again). By now we've figure out that the crap whiskies deserve a third and fourth chance, especially if somebody leaves their glass unattended at the table.

We're growing a little tired of the simplicity of Piggies so John introduces us to a kind of 500's sort of game. He's not entirely sure of the rules but we make it up as we go along and it would appear to be quite good because suddenly it's pushing 2:30am. We hit the sack with the ominous knowledge of tomorrow's weather warning of strong winds. Interesting, we thought the winds were strong today.....

Monday morning and we're eating breakfast listening to the solemn gale whistling through every crevice. The Thredbo River is banked by heavy tree cover and eventually winds into a gorge so it will be quite sheltered from this wind, right? That's good enough for us, let's go! We split into teams of two: Jason and John; Jim and I.

The weather forecast predicts increasing wind into the afternoon with a possible storm. The barometer is plummeting and the fishing is correspondingly "hard". The wind is gusty on the river but we can get casts off between the gusts. We see very few fish actually - well, okay, we see one. With Jim as my spotter, I crack off a few good good casts to it and get a strike but fail to set the hook and it sprints to cover.

With few sighted fish we start working the river upstream. Nymphing through the pocket water and pools and swinging streamers through the shallow runs. We're happy with our casting and presentation but no takes. Multiples changes of fly but still no cigar. We encounter a handful of fellow anglers including a bait fisherman and none bar the baiter has caught anything and he's only hooked an undersize brown. It appears the conditions today are simply unconducive to fishing. Still, there's no escaping the realisation that this is a mightily beautiful place to not catch fish.



By late afternoon the storm is well on it's way and the wind is so strong it's like casting at a sheet of glass. It's time to call it a day. We meet with John and Jason who claim to have snagged a fish or two out of the lake (I didn't see them but they were probably quite small) but no-one has managed to catch a coveted river trout. We retire to indoors.

Dinner. Piggies. 500s-ish cards. Whisky. Bed with the wind howling a rage and rattling the rafters. The wind reaches an official overnight peak of 117km/h! That's some Hard Fishing™ right there!

The wind has eased somewhat by the following morning but would still qualify as "gusty with patches of cyclone" so we elect not to rise at dusk for an early morning fish. Instead we have a lazy breakfast and pack our gear in preparation for our departure. We spend the remainder of the morning practice casting on the edge of the lake. As we depart the resort, the sun pokes through the clouds as it sunnily greets a rapidly rising barometer. Oh, for fu.....!



We drive back to Canberra where we enjoy one last night of Piggies, 500's(ish) and a bit more scotch and ruminate on the week passed. We agree that despite the unfavourable fishing conditions, Lake Crackenback Resort is an excellent destination, not just for fishing but for relaxation and/or outdoor sports. It's a pristine environment with a beautiful stretch of river to fish. We saw only four other fishermen on the several kilometres of river that we fished; we feel we've stumbled upon a well-kept secret. It's a fishing destination worthy of further investigation in better weather.

It's also a fishing destination where you can take your non-fishing family. The resort offers plenty of indoor and outdoor activities to keep the family entertained while you nick off for a day's fishing on the river, and Lake Jindabyne and Thredbo are just down the road - everyone's happy. We certainly intend to visit Crackers again in future years.

On the journey back from Canberra we stop at what is probably the supreme carp fishery in the country, Lake Keepit in Tamworth, where the only thing bigger than the carp is.....well, there is nothing bigger than the carp there; just ask any resident pelican that's tried to eat one!

Unfortunately the wild wind from Crackers seemed to have trailed us north but it's a testament to the quality of carpin' at Keepit that not even inclement weather can stop the colossal carp from pouncing on a fly. The heavily wind-riffled water sweeping the banks of the dam made challenging work of spotting fish that were only a few metres away and the howling wind made it equally difficult to drop a fly on them. But there was no shortage of fish to cast to and it wasn't long before I hooked into a beauty which took me out to the backing. Unfortunately the heavy irrigation requirements of the local cotton industry had left Keepit at a mere 15% capacity. With the rocks on the dam's bottom so much closer to the surface my beauty broke me off and was away. Still, a carp taking me to the backing is a first for me so I take ample solace from that.



After a sleepover at Tamworth, Jim and I commence the final leg of our journey back through Lismore and then onward to Brisbane. We decide to stop at Ebor and check out the hatchery. This turned out to be a most entertaining and instructive visit. It starts with a 10 minute video summarising the entire operation from the herding of breeding stock, the collection of trout ova and sperm (who would have thought that people wank fish for a living?), to fertilisation and the raising of brood to fingerlings for subsequent release into streams. After our short film we are free to wander around the facility.

I surrender to my inner child and buy a pouch of fish food to take on our self-guided tour. The ponds here are packed with fish and a scattering of fish food invites a veritable eruption of trout in the ponds. The feeding frenzy is so immediate, vigorous and focussed on the arrival of food that with the judicious scattering of pellets you can make patterns in the water with the erupting fish. I made several attempts at "drawing" a smiley face in the water but just couldn't hold enough pellets in my hand to complete the picture. Oh well, it was fun trying and will likely be the only time in my life I have fish at my command.

We check out the brood tanks with it's thousands upon thousands of inch long fish and a staff member kindly spends a good long while answering our every question.

Armed with a supplied local mud map we depart the hatchery and head to a local stream for a brief fish before we continue our journey. We fish for an hour but, sadly, don't see a fish despite the beautiful "fishy" surrounds. We head on our final leg homeward.

Over the course of the week we've destroyed about half our whisky. Not our best effort, admittedly; on our previous trip to Eucumbene we did have to restock mid week. But we haven't shamed ourselves and we have saved a fair bit on fuel consumption for the drive home which, as you know, was our primary reason for chugging through as much as possible. So that would be mission accomplished then - or at least half accomplished.

So with this wide selection at our disposal, which whiskies do we recommend? Well..... (drum roll, please).....

The Trophy Fish Award for the level best whisky on this trip goes to.....[Glenmorangie Nectar d'Or](#). Great stuff! If someone serves you this, they want to have sex with you.

And the Doorstop Award for the level worst whisky goes to.....[The Glenrothes](#). Don't ever buy this, people! If someone serves you this, they want you to die. Close runner-up is the Indian (that ought to be warning enough) whisky, [Amrut Fusion](#). If someone serves you this followed by The Glenrothes, you *will* die.

All up, a fabulous trip, with fabulous company, lots of laughs, almost no fish and a crapload of whisky. I give this trip an 8 out of 10.

Next year.....NEW ZEALAND! Where all whisky is duty free!

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