



AUSTRALIAN FLY FISHING MUSEUM

CLARENDON - TASMANIA

Clarendon, Tasmania

To become home for the Australian Fly Fishing Museum.

Why Clarendon?

Clarendon House is one of the most important properties of the National Trust (Tasmania). It was built by James Cox in the 1830s and is an architectural and heritage icon with many unique features. Situated in Tasmania's northern Midlands, the western side of the property is flanked by the South Esk River and across the river can be seen Symmons Plains.

What has this got to do with a fly fishing museum? Fly fishing in Australia is predominately fly fishing for trout and it was James Arndell Youl* from across the river at Symmons Plains who was primarily responsible for the successful acclimatisation of trout in the southern hemisphere.

After many attempts the first little trout hatched in Tasmania in 1864. The same James Youl had married Eliza Cox, sister of James Cox, at Clarendon in 1839 and this was an association that two keen fly fishers, Mike Stevens and Ron Dennis, had firmly in their minds when they were looking for a place to house a fly fishing museum. Discussions with the National Trust's (Tasmania) managing director, Chris Tassell, progressed quite enthusiastically, and when accommodation for the museum was suggested in the shepherd's cottage, the fate was sealed. Clarendon was now to become home for Australia's first fly fishing museum.

Although there is a Museum of Trout Fishing at Plenty, near Hobart, there is little interest for fly fishers. This project is certainly not about taking anything away from the Plenty museum, but more about building a relevant, outstanding and lasting legacy focussed on fly fishing in both fresh and saltwater in Australia.

Tasmania has a long and rich heritage of fly fishing and although trout were not the target it was in March 1833 that fly fishing was first mentioned in print in Australia. Thomas Richards published 'A Day's Fishing in the Plenty' in the Hobart Town Magazine thirty years before the acclimatisation of trout. Richards



Clarendon House, a fine example of Georgian architecture with a grand portico influenced by the designs of colonial America. The Australian Museum of Fly Fishing will be housed in the shepherd's cottage.

writes about catching mullet on a 'red hackle' or 'fern fly', but it is certain the fish were Australian grayling. He goes on to say they filled their baskets, stopped to lunch on 'broiled fish, new potatoes, and bottled porter' and then continued 'to the river side, to renew our murderous sport, which we pursued with unrelenting vigour, till our baskets [would] positively contain no more'.

R. H. Wigram came to Tasmania in 1921 and was a direct descendant of Money Wigram who donated space on the ship Norfolk which brought the first trout ova to successfully hatch in Tasmania. 'Dick' Wigram, as we all know, wrote several keenly sought and collectable books on fly fishing and he is just a small part of the history which will be captured at the Australian Fly Fishing Museum.

Why is the National Trust involved?

Whilst Clarendon seemed like a perfect fit for somewhere to house a fly fishing museum there was much more. A strong acquisitions policy was important, as were charitable donations, grants, insurance, liabilities, curating, conservation, financial controls and more. Starting a museum from scratch and trying to ensure all necessary things were covered



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seemed impossible, but it was realised that the National Trust do all these things, and have successfully done so for many years. Most of the challenges were the same. After some soul searching it was realised that being part of the National Trust brought huge benefits and reinventing the wheel was not necessary. The museum was proposed to operate in a similar way to other 'Friends of the National Trust' groups. This gave control to the Australian Fly Fishing Museum committee, but with all the guidance, knowledge and benefits of the National Trust. The Trust covers all the on ground property costs, plus the committee's costs for insurance, financial auditing, stationery, etc. and will provide the committee with its systems and protocols to run the museum. And that's how the Australian Fly Fishing Museum will operate. A committee was formed and includes: David Grisold, Tony Wright, Jennie Chapman, Michael Youl, Rex Hunt, Chris Tassell, Mike Stevens, Todd Lambert, Janet Lambert, Ron Dennis, Hugh Maltby, Greg Peart, Peter Boag and Stuart Cottrell. The committee has developed an Action Plan and a Business Plan, brochures and more. Applications for grant money has started and already been successful with a \$25,000 grant and more than \$30,000 of private money already promised. Plans for acquisitions, restoration and display of museum pieces has also begun. An initial chronology of fly fishing's important dates, events and people is being developed and from this an acquisitions and displays plan will be developed. The museum is starting with a clean slate and this will allow something really special to take place where every display will be planned from the start, rather than put together from a haphazard collection of existing material.



The Australian Museum of Fly Fishing will be housed in the shepherd's cottage - a short distance from both the grand Clarendon house and the South Esk River.

When will the Australian Fly Fishing Museum open?

4 May 2013 with a grand opening dinner, cocktail party and photography exhibition.

If you have suggestions on exhibits, people, places or events that you think warrant inclusion in the initial display please forward them to Mike Stevens mike@tasfish.com or the Curator, Rhonda Hamilton Rhonda.Hamilton@nationaltrusttas.org.au. Also, if you have or know of interesting fly fishing material you would like to donate, or sell when we have money, please contact Mike Stevens on 0418 129949 or mike@tasfish.com or Jennie Chapman at Clarendon.

*James Youl was born at Caddai, near Windsor, NSW, on 28 December 1810. He was called 'Arndell' after Thomas Arndell, assistant surgeon to the new settlement in Australia, who sailed with the First Fleet in 1787. James was at school in England when news reached him of his father's death in 1827. He promptly assumed the position of head of the family at the property in Van Diemen's Land that had been acquired from 1819. He was granted 500 acres of land at Symmons Plains in 1827. His male siblings also received similar land grants from the Crown. By 1828 James had purchased several other grants from the families of Bostock, Lucas, McNab, and Smith. James was appointed JP (1837) and a magistrate, and was keenly interested in public affairs. He married Eliza Cox on 9 July 1839 at Clarendon, Evandale, Tasmania. Eliza was born 25 August 1817 at Richmond, NSW, the second daughter of Lieut William Cox (1789-1850) and Elizabeth Piper (1792-1872) of Hobartville, Richmond, NSW. William Cox Jnr, eldest son of William Cox Snr, is now best remembered for building the first road over the Blue Mountains. James and Eliza had five boys and eight girls. [From the Friends of the West Norwood Cemetery Newsletter, September 2008, by Bob Flanagan.]



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Items of interest the museum is looking to acquire through donation or purchase.

Please contact Mike Stevens: 0418 129949 mike@tasfish.com, Rhonda Hamilton, the museum curator, Rhonda.Hamilton@nationaltrusttas.org.au or the National Trust Head Office 6344 6233

- Anything related to fly fishing in Australia from 1833 to current.
- Fresh and salt water – all species.
- If it has any history available even better.
- Photos, slides, postcards or newspaper cuttings.
- Fly fishing tackle and ephemera from 1830s to present. The earliest tackle would have been manufactured in England. May include bags, scales, line winders, lines, casts, creels, jackets, hats etc.
- Fly rods – earliest would be English, such as Hardy, Farlows etc.
- Fly rods – Australian. These may include Southam, Gillies, Turville, JR Green, Slazenger, Robert Cox, Butterworth etc.
- Australian fly rods by Suffrein – from 1872.
- Landing nets by Hardy, Streamcraft and others.
- Fly reels - English up to 1960s.
- Fly reels – Australian such as Gillies, Hartleys, Dawson, Rainbow, Hartsport, Southam, Goulburn, Spalding, Atlas, Derwent, Austin, Streamcraft and more.
- Catalogues from Mick Simmons, Hartleys, MSD (Melbourne Sports Depot), Gillies, Sydney Fishing Tackle Supply, Hordern, Eastways and other various stores and often hardware suppliers.
- Flies from earliest times – especially those in boxes, or owned by someone of renown.
- Diaries – especially from 1800s and to mid 1900s.
- Books on fly fishing – especially Australian or with Australian content.
- Old magazines and papers with Australian fly fishing content.
- Books, booklets and newsletters from fishing and fly fishing clubs with fly fishing content.
- Tourism posters featuring fishing.
- Old film footage of fly fishing or fly fishers.
- Branded boxes and ephemera from Eastways, Mick Simmons, Bridges Bros, Charles Davis, Allen and Slater, Wigram and Ross etc.
- Annual reports from fly fishing clubs, or reports with fly fishing content.
- Fly fishing clothing from the past.
- Display cases suitable for the museum.
- Items the Museum can auction or sell to raise funds.
- In kind support if you are a cabinet maker for example and can help build displays.