

**WORLD FLY FISHING CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
**SPEECH BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE KATE WARNER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**CIVIC SQUARE, LAUNCESTON, SATURDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2019**

Good evening and thank you Mike Stevens and colleagues for inviting Dick and me to attend this Welcome Event of the 39<sup>th</sup> FIPS -Mouche World Fly Fishing Championship.

Thank you Sharon Holbrook for your welcome to country.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land— the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, who have survived invasion and dispossession, and continue to maintain their identity, culture and Indigenous rights.

Tasmanian Aboriginal people speared blackfish, eels and ‘brim’ in rivers and streams, not of course trout, an introduced species, which I will talk about shortly. They also caught freshwater crayfish including the Giant Freshwater Lobster they called ‘lutaralpina’, an endangered species found only in rivers in the north of our island and which is the world’s largest freshwater invertebrate. This amazing crustacean lives for up to 60 years and can weigh up to 6kg but is more usually between 2 and 3kg. It is now protected so if you happen to be lucky enough to see one, leave well alone!

Thank you in particular to Malcolm Crosse, Director of this Championship. Now, many of you will know that a Governor’s yearly program is a busy one and that many events are put in place well ahead of time – say, up to a year. But I can tell you that in the case of Malcolm this was not so. It may be a product of the fact that trout anglers have enormous amounts of patience, because Malcolm first invited me to make this speech more than three-and-a-half years ago!

There was of course a good rationale for that, insofar as Fly Fish Australia had just announced the success of its bid to host the 39th Championship in Tasmania, as unanimously voted by thirty member countries at their meeting in Portugal.

And now we are here and it is with the greatest pleasure that as Governor I am able to welcome, on behalf of all Tasmanians, the competing teams representing 23 nations. Dick and I did meet some of you last year when an advance delegation visited Government House for tea – including Glenn Eggleton Championship Organiser; Ranald Moore, Secretary; Robert Staples, President of Fly Fish Australia; John Diggle IFS Director Tasmania and Edoardo Ferrero, Vice-President of Fips Mouche.

Given how intimately you will become acquainted with some of our rivers and lakes in your five competition sessions over five days, I thought I would speak briefly about the fish in them. Tasmania has few native freshwater fish species but there are native blackfish and bass, eels and galaxiids.

So, how and when were trout introduced? A meeting of the Royal Society of Tasmania in Hobart in April 1860 resolved to work with the Australasian Association in London to attempt to introduce trout and salmon to Tasmania. This was because of the increasing popularity of acclimatisation of animals, that is, introducing native British species into British colonies, for commercial and recreational benefit.

In hindsight this was, in many cases, not a good idea. Gorse, blackberries and willows became plant pests and carp, starlings and rabbits, fauna pests.

In fact the Government of Tasmania in 1860 had appointed a person to investigate Tasmania's rivers to gauge their suitability, primarily for salmon initially. What was known was the difficulty of sending ova in ships, which "were tossed about and passed through many variable temperatures."<sup>1</sup>

After several years of failures, Sir James Youl successfully brought trout and salmon from England, sending them as ova packed in moss, kept moist by melting ice and prevented from becoming waterlogged by drawing off surplus water.<sup>2</sup> These were hatched at the Salmon Ponds at Plenty but the

releases of salmon were unsuccessful – the salmon released into the Plenty River did not return. However, trout did acclimatise after being released into a number of rivers and Central Plateau lakes. And fishing licences were introduced in 1870.<sup>3</sup>

And I can tell you that a Tasmanian Governor in the 1980s and early 90s, a keen angler, introduced trout into our quarry pond at Government House. They did not survive because of the low dissolved oxygen levels in the water.

And speaking of Tasmanian Governors, Viscount Gormanston, who was Governor here from 1893 to 1900, had a reputation as an obsessive fly fisherman, so much so that newspapers eventually took him to task for it, and they did so with considerable amusement. Let me quote this to you from an 1896 piece in Launceston's *Daily Telegraph*:

“The Lake District is a favourite resort for anglers, and one of the most enthusiastic is His Excellency, Lord Gormanston. Part of the bottom of the lake is rocky and part muddy. It is the custom for the anglers to don watertights, and stand patiently in about two feet of water until the fish bites. The Governor got hold of a soft spot to stand on his last excursion, and as he turns the scale at something over 20 stone he got into trouble. As soon as he had sunk in the ooze up to his middle he thought that it was time to cry out for assistance, which came up in the shape of a posse of men equipped with ropes. The lines were made fast on to His Lordship, and then the word was given by the guardian of the lake to ‘heave away’. It was a big heave, but strong hands and willing hearts did it, and the Queen’s representative was safely landed.”<sup>4</sup>

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I know that there is some controversy about how to wish an angler well. ‘Tight lines’ has been criticised as annoying, twee and cheesy and ‘Good luck’ also annoying because in this sport what you require is not luck but skill! I could say ‘Go with those woolly buggers’ but would be inappropriate language for a Governor!

So, I’ll just say: have fun, enjoy our wonderful rivers and lakes and thank you for choosing Tasmania for the 39<sup>th</sup> FIPS-Mouche World Fly Fishing Championship.

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<sup>1</sup> Mercury, Monday 6 May 1861 page 2.

<sup>2</sup> NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF THE CENTRAL PLATEAU by G.H. Stancombe "Glendessary", Western Junction

<sup>3</sup> Alison Alexander and David Young, 'Recreational Fishing', The Companion to Tasmanian History, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Daily Telegraph (Launceston), Saturday 4 January 1896, page 6.