

## Paddle for Pedder 2020 - through the eyes of Restore Pedder campaigner, Lindsay Hope



The Restore Pedder camp and Paddle for Pedder weekend, on the new Lake Pedder in the South West Tasmania World Heritage Area, was led by some adventurous and inspiring young people. They give me great hope for the future. The weekend of Paddle, Walk and Talk was impressively organised by the Restore Pedder Project Officer Jessica Robbins, who also paddled, and the very challenging Paddle for Pedder was meticulously coordinated and ably led by Tasmanian adventurer Andy Szollosi.

The mostly young paddle group together with some of us 'Elders' who tried to Save Lake Pedder 50 years ago, met and camped on Saturday night, February 29, at the Huon Campground near the Scotts Peak Dam. Sue and I had flown down from Queensland on 22 January to stay at our Bicheno shack for a month or so, after first sending our Suzuki Vitara SUV down from Queensland on a truck, so we could collect it in Hobart soon after we arrived. We had been excited about the prospects of the weekend for many months and wondered if, at our age, we would both manage to be fit and well enough to attend and camp by the time the weekend arrived. We tried hard to look after ourselves on visits to, and walks at, Cradle mountain and Freycinet National Park and were pleased to find that we appeared to be getting fitter and healthier from the fresh air walks in wonderland, prior to the Pedder weekend.

We had not camped together in our small hike tent for many years and wondered if we would get much, or any sleep. We had our small Therm A Rest air mattresses and sleeping bags. As it turned out, we did not sleep well, managing to gain just a few hours. However, this did not matter as before hand we had enjoyed a wonderful evening of very delicious vegetarian food provided by chefs Lisa Searle and Eric Hayward, and the camaraderie as we sat around the campfire (we could not light because of fire restrictions). There we exchanged inspiring stories of our past original Lake Pedder experiences. The discussions were led by Christine Milne, a co-convenor

of the Restore Pedder Committee, and from memory those who contributed stories and inspiration were, Bob Brown, Paul Thomas, Rob Blakers, Dick Friend, Sue Hope and finally myself with a short account of past years, together with a few songs.

I had asked Jess if she would like me to share a few appropriate songs and tunes, on guitar and harmonica, with the gathered group and she replied “Yay”. The songs I chose were firstly an old Australian bush song ‘The Bill of Tea’. This was one of the songs Sue & I sang with the Launceston Walking Club around the time of our marriage 50 years ago. The second was a John Williamson song, ‘You Come Back To Tassie’. John Williamson and Bob Brown are both supporters or members of Bush Heritage Australia. John was inspired to write the song after he visited Bob at his Liffey property, which Bob later donated to Bush Heritage Australia. The third item, on harmonica and guitar, was ‘Somewhere over the Rainbow’ and the final song was the Neil Murray version of ‘My Island Home’, sung as best I could after being inspired by Paul Kelly’s moving rendition of the song at a 2019 protest rally outside parliament house in Canberra. Fifty years ago we used to sing songs such as ‘We Shall Overcome’. Unfortunately we, thousands of other Australians, and 184 world scientists who signed a petition, were not able to ‘Overcome’ the very bad decisions of Governments back then. Ever since then it has been my life long wish that the original Lake Pedder would one day be restored. There is now a strong drive to ‘Overcome’ and Right a Wrong.

Early on Sunday the Paddle for Pedder commenced. We hoped that the paddlers had gained better sleep than us as they had a very strenuous day in front of them. The aim was to paddle out 13 kilometres on the new lake from the Scotts Peak dam site to raise the RESTORE PEDDER banner above the original Lake Pedder 3 kilometre long beach. It lies intact 15 metres below. They set off, and continued during the morning battling a strong north westerly breeze. Fortunately after lunch on the water, and as they pushed further north west, conditions miraculously calmed and they were able to successfully raise the banner on the water above the old beach. Rob Blakers on his red outrigger kayak-sail craft captured the amazing scene with his drone photography. Then of course they had to face the long 13 kilometre paddle back. Fortunately the unpredictable southwest weather worked in their favour and they were able to return with a strong north west wind at their backs, with waves to push them along. After raising the banner the four kayakers concerned were able to initially ‘sail’ with the banner up, gently back in the right direction for 20 minutes. Congratulations to these wonderful, hardy people.



After Andy Szollosi, Jessica Robbins and Kayaking Team departed from the south east end of the new Lake Pedder, on their Paddle for Pedder to successfully raise the Restore Pedder banner over the original Lake Pedder beach, Sue and I drove the 77 kilometres to Strathgordon. It is located at the north west end of the new Lake Pedder in the South West World Heritage Area. The model of the Gordon hydro scheme (photo 5) shows the original Lake Pedder in darker bluey-grey shading just left of centre near the bottom of the photograph. It's beach which runs along the eastern, or right hand side, of the lake is 3 kilometres long. This evidence of scale reveals that the dams created two new lakes covering an enormous area.

At the lodge and on the walks around the area once covered by the dam building town, Sue and I learnt from Dr Anita Wild about areas that have been successfully ecologically restored after the town was dismantled. We understand that similar techniques can be used to ecologically restore large flooded land areas, basically by doing minimum work to assist the gradual natural germination of native plant seeds that have long lay dormant in the soil.

After an enjoyable lunch at the lodge, further educational discussion was held in the conference room led by speakers, Christine Milne, Anita Wild, Todd Duddley and visiting United States Eco Health academic James Aronson. He explained that he was enthusiastic about the restoration of the lake and the positive health benefits for the community in being involved in restoration and in seeing the Earth repaired instead of being further degraded.

