

Trip Report
Golden Beach - Light House Reach
24-06-17
by Marjon de Boer

Henry Pinter got up at 5:00 am. It was still dark. The temperature in Ipswich read seven degrees Celsius. Eighty year old Henry put on his socks, grabbed his paddle and headed out the door, humming a little song. At approximately the same time in Redcliffe, myself, not even close to fifty, was woken up by the alarm. It was still dark but at least five degrees warmer than Henry's place. I grumpily felt around for a lost left sock and hit the snooze button.

Forward to 8:00am at the Caloundra Motor Boat Club. A small group of six paddlers gathered under the picnic shelter to finally get the answer to a question that had played heavily on their minds for days: At what time would it be high tide at Lighthouse Ridge? Group leader Malcolm came armed with photocopied aerial photos with big arrows that pointed to various locations, a tide chart and numbers in his brain of semidiurnal tide planes variations. I ate a banana and Henry did a few push ups in the park whilst they worked it out.

At the launch from a small sandy beach Kay shared her love for pelicans with me. As far as Kay is concerned, pelicans are super cool because nothing seems to face them. They simply do not get worked up about anything, they are always relaxed. I watched a trio of pelicans float past as she spoke and, at the time, it made sense to me. However, since making similar assumptions about black swans that later proved to be as far from the truth as you could ever imagine, I am now cautious about assumptions about birds. Nice beaks though.

Light winds and sunshine followed us south on the way to Lighthouse Reach picnic area. We paddled in a tight group whilst making small talk. Apart from me. I had some serious questions for Henry about how to stay healthy and active forever. Looks like I have to make a few adjustments if I want to go on club paddles in 40 years time.

The picnic area at Lighthouse Reach has everything; sheltered picnic tables, trees, waggy tails and, before you get any ideas about hanging your hammock, rangers on patrol. Malcolm searched in vain for matches to light his broken Jetboil, Helena and Kay swapped recipe tips and I discovered bananas are much bigger in Ipswich than in Redcliffe.

We took a stroll to the lighthouse remains. I quickly realised that sometimes it is more fun to let your imagination run wild than seeing the real thing as we stared at the big empty concrete slab. Not even a commemorative plaque in sight. I looked at Henry hoping he might know lots about SE Qld lighthouse history, but Henry said nothing. I looked at Helena, but she was busy catching up with her phone activity. Kay was looking up at the sky and pondered out loud to what extent you'd have to take annual tree growth into account when you are constructing a lighthouse. Mark touched a faint wooden corner foundation to speculate about the construction materials that were highly likely used. It was Malcolm who had the lightbulb moment and suggested the club rent out Double Point Lighthouse for a weekend for a wild party and some paddling. August next year, get ready!

Back on the water a few of us grew increasingly nervous about the upcoming Grade 2 Assessment Day. Three minutes seems a long time to rescue yourself but I never should have said I would set a new club record and do it in 30 seconds, I never should have put it in black and white either. I also realised my towrope had serious issues after comparing mine to Helena and Kay's. They had made them during a club towrope making session. I liked Kay's comment that it would be great if all club members had this system they would be able to be easily used by anyone as they would all be the same, saving time and confusion. I have 6 days to make one!

We paddled in shallow waters carpeted by dusty looking seagrass, occasionally making stingrays spurt off and making those millions of tiny silver bait fishes momentarily dance in front of our bows. Just as we thought we were nearly home and all the fun was had, Malcolm gave us a detour by stopping at a bald patch of dune with dead trees. We walked through low scrub to be greeted by a blue ocean and small crashing waves. Helena spontaneously performed a cartwheel or two and proceeded to dive into the sea. I suppose that's the sort of thing you do when you are on long service leave. Henry didn't, but he is retired, which is different.

Now on the homestretch for real, we spotted some black swans. Five minutes later Kay shouted excitedly 'look, black swans'. Ten minutes later Helena shouted excitedly 'look, black swans'. After releasing some hard-hitting facts about the real antics of black swans that draw scarily close parallels with human behaviour, no one from this group will ever be excited to spot black swans again. As all good group leaders should, Malcolm changed the now controversial subject and told us a wonderful story about the goose that one day turned up on his doorstep. To cut a long story short, it fell in love with Malcolm's hen and decided to stay. Malcolm should have stopped there. I don't want to spoil the ending but you are going to find out anyway. The goose later got dumped by the hen for another goose and eventually murdered by a dingo. Sorry.

We parted ways dreaming about that Grade 2 badge, the G2 waterproof sticker for on our kayaks and the silver cup with sparkling fake golden G2 letters on top we will surely receive next week. I will do the rescue in 30 seconds and pull off the best tow you have ever seen. Unless I won't make it because it is dark and cold and it is just too hard.

But never for Henry. He will simply get up, put on his socks, grab his paddle and hum a little song as he gets into the car on his way to the next club trip.