

From Morse Code to Virtual Regattas

"If you had asked me a few months ago about Morse code, signalling flags and semaphore, I would have said they are outmoded and no longer relevant in modern society", says Andrew, one of the New Lynn Scout Group leaders. But when he found himself teaching Morse code online to the Keas (5-8-year olds) during lockdown, he realised these old-school communication techniques from the past weren't so dusty after all.

Using Lego blocks to represent the dots and dashes of Morse code, the Keas learned how to spell their names. Add the idea of a torch to the mix to signal the letters with flashes and you have happy Keas running around in the dark with torch in hand for hours on end. Over the following weeks they also learned how to communicate using signalling flags and semaphore signals.

For the older Scouts and Venturers, lockdown meant missing the eagerly awaited Auckland Regatta in April. So out came the tarpaulins, and shelters were built in back yards so they could still 'camp' on regatta weekend. Despite this, withdrawal symptoms from being off the water soon set in.

The solution: an online virtual regatta. Just after midday each day of the school holidays, three 6-7 minute races were sailed, along with a weekend race series covering four weekends. The online racing had all the wind shifts, wind gusts,

rules of the road at sea, and even the odd dolphin jumping out of the water as they used courses set up in different harbours around the globe - and all from the comfort and safety of home.

In this futuristic world of virtual reality, the usual roles got turned on their heads as it soon became clear who was teaching whom; while Andrew is used to being at the front of the fleet in real boats, it was the younger Scouts with the least time on the water who dominated the virtual

sailing. Andrew also suspects they slowed down on a few occasions to let him sail past, just so he was not always last over the finish line!

The New Lynn Sea Scout Group caters for boys and girls aged 5-19 years. So if you want a slice of the action on the water, or to go camping and explore the awesome adventure playground that we are blessed with out West, then give Andrew a call on 027 6939 756 or check out www.newlynn.seascouts.org.nz for more details.



Fletcher and Marshal built a makeshift shelter while Mackenzie pitched a tent to go 'camping' for Auckland Regatta Weekend.

ANZAC Day is always an important day in the New Lynn Sea Scouts' calendar. This year it was the call to Stand at Dawn for Fletcher and Marshal, while Stella got creative with wreath making.