

The magic of a new boat

At the start of 2021 the New Lynn Sea Scouts became the proud owners of a brand new Welsford Houdini lugsail rigged sailing boat, thanks to the generosity of Don Sollit.

It was late 2020 when Don advertised via Trade Me for expressions of interest, offering the \$20,000 boat and trailer package for the small sum of only \$10 to a group, family or individual that could demonstrate a passion for both the craft and the sea. The craft had taken Don seven years to complete. In the end he decided he wanted to donate it to a worthy recipient.

Over fifty applications registering interest in the Houdini were received from throughout New Zealand. While the patrons were able to discount some of the contenders fairly quickly, there were a number at the top end of the range that made their decision-making process much harder as they worked through the merits of each. In the end it was the track record, the programme, leadership, and importantly the stewardship of the New Lynn Group that stood out from the rest.

The Houdini will complement the group's Pathfinder yacht which they use for coastal cruising - also a John Welsford designed boat. Welsford is a prolific Kiwi boat designer of cruising sailing dinghies who has a considerable international following.



Houdini's first sail: Some senior Scouts take the Houdini for its first sail at French Bay in a fresh 15-20 knot breeze, commenting on their return to shore, "Cool, this is one lively boat!". This matches with John Welsford's intention designing a boat with a large sail area to weight ratio. L-R Josefine, Alex, Zara (hidden), Willow, Elijah.

The Houdini will add another offering to New Lynn's weeknight boating programmes. While mid-week they undertake lots of different water-based

activity, the opportunities for sailing are more limited due to the time it takes to rig their traditional Scout cutters. The Houdini - which could be described as an Optimist on steroids - has the advantage of being very quick to rig.

Being much bigger than an Optimist (a typical learn-to-sail youth boat), the Houdini has room for 4-6 on board at once compared to the opti making it ideal for getting the group's younger members out on the water under sail.

Andrew, one of New Lynn Scouts leaders, comments that the Houdini will add new challenges and experiences for the younger members, while the older members have an attraction to the boat's more traditional rig.

Don wanted to see the craft go to a group with 'seawater in their veins'; for it to have a home somewhere that could offer a 'life changing experience' to those using the boat. Both elements tie in nicely with the ethos of scouting which focuses on the personal development of its membership via its outdoor adventure-based programme.

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 blest with out west, then give Andrew a ring on 027 6939 756, or check out www.newlynn.seascouts.org.nz for more details.



Don Sollit (front, white shirt) passing on the custodianship of the boat he built to the New Lynn Sea Scouts.