



Sails away – that's torn it

Maritime Museum
puts on a voyage of
discovery, writes

Chris Eagles

THE grandsons — aged 4 and 5 — thought it was all part of the entertainment when one of the crew of the scow Ted Ashby got his jeans ripped open while hoisting the mainsail.

I guess in a way they were right, it was just the sort of adventure you come to expect from a day out at the marvellous Voyager New Zealand Maritime Museum.

And, luckily, the damage stopped a few centimetres short of causing real problems for charming Brazilian visitor, Roberto, who was standing in for a crew member on the scow when the accident happened.

A sail around the harbour on the Ted Ashby, a replica of the scows which used to carry cargo around the coast in the days before good roads, is just one of the extras offered by the museum ... and our small boys loved it.

As we headed away from the wharf a wind blew up and there was some debate among the vol-

unteer crew whether to raise the sails at all, but the spirit of adventure prevailed and the sheets went up both masts, with the two grandsons enthusiastically assisting the old salts.

We headed at a fast clip up harbour towards the iconic coathanger.

All the passengers stared up at the vast network of girders on the underside of the 50-year-old structure and watched preparations for a bungee jump.

Would the jumper land on our deck?

However, on Captain Gavin McGregor's orders, the scow's crew executed a swift turn with the sails and we were soon back under the bridge and heading up the harbour towards the old petroleum storage area — known as the tank farm — where we waved to a group of tourists taking photos.

All too soon it was down sails as the captain took the scow into the ferry berthing area.

This time the action was crew only — although the boys volunteered their help — and there were no more torn trousers.

The passengers left the charming scow with reluctance.

The conditions had been just right for a good sail, the children on board obeyed all safety

instructions but were still able to see the sights, and the crew were more than happy to answer any questions.

However, the adventure had not quite finished. Just a few metres along the wharf museum staff member Chris Murray was preparing to fire the midday cannon. Watched by a crowd of children from Youth Town and a bunch of restaurant diners, the weapon made an amazing din for its 50cm length, and along with the warning signal from a clanging ship's bell the noise and puffs of smoke were enough to satisfy any youngster's desire for action.

As all that indicates, the Maritime Museum had even more to see than we had expected, making it a good way to spend four hours during the school holidays and our grandsons hugely enjoyed all the interactive exhibitions.

They especially liked playing on the Rewa, an 1876 gaff-rigged coastal trading cutter.

As we left to catch the Devonport ferry home Roberto, now viewing the museum as a visitor, strolled past, his torn jeans now longer gaping but patched together with the biggest stitches I'd ever seen ... obviously the work of a retired sailmaker.



FUN: The boys helped the crew during the harbour sail on the Ted Ashby.

PICTURES / ALEX EAGLES

» CHECKLIST

MARITIME MUSEUM

■ FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find out about the Voyager
New Zealand Maritime Museum at
www.maritimemuseum.co.nz