

This week 9 Riley and 9 Royal had their school camp at El Rancho in Waikanae. We arrived just after lunch on a very pleasant Monday to move into our accommodation and undertake a reconnoiter of the many facilities of the camp. This was a puzzle with some quite hard-to-find symbols that tested the patience of many, and that was just the teachers.

This was followed by a slip-and-slide on the camp water slide that engaged many in a contest to get the biggest splash possible. It was also a welcome cool down to the quite hot conditions. Dinner was our first literal taste of what can sometimes be dreaded camp food. However, they set the bar high with lovely nachos served with corn chips and salad and they even had a long line of students who wanted seconds, and thirds.

This was followed by a stunning bonfire, which may have lost its effect in the very bright evening light but the marshmallow toasting that ensued was a welcome dessert, even if the ingestion of the charred remains of a marshmallow isn't quite my cup of tea. Speaking of tea, drinks of tea and hot chocolate and an evening biscuit followed soon after with a relatively easy lights out and quiet in camp at 10pm on the first night.

Our second day at camp involved a range of activities with team building challenges, rock climbing and a fantastic crate challenge, kayaking on the lake, and 'tubing' down the Waikanae river (my favourite). A high standard in the kitchen was again set with some nice chicken burgers for lunch and a chicken roast for dinner. The day was finished off with a very welcome evening swim in the camp pool followed by supper and lights out. It was a great day and there were many very tired bodies at the end of it.

The final day was breakfast, receiving a packed lunch and cleaning up before departure for school. All the students seemed to have a great time. I'm sure many bonds will have been forged, not only between the students, but between the students and staff.

I'd like to thank all the staff who took time out of their lives to support our rangatahi at camp. In particular, I want to highlight our two year 9 Deans, Jed Shepherd and Tina Stolze, who oversaw the organisation.

Bring on the rest of the camps!

