
NZLSAR News

Volume 5 Issue 2

April 1999

CONTENTS

Bulmer Rescue

The Wellington SARTEST

The Dog Dosing Strip at Dunsandel

Police SAR Course

Insurance

Advisers List Review

Certificates and ID Cards

Bulmer Rescue or how I spent New Year

On December 31st 1998, Nelson Police received a call at 0915 hours alerting them to an accident in Bulmer Cave system on Mt Owen. A caver, who was part of an expedition, had fallen 12 – 15 metres down a vertical shaft (pitch).

The accident occurred when one of the rope's anchors, a large solid looking piece of rock, failed and fell on the caver. The caver had injuries to his jaw, left arm, both knees and thighs. The other two members bandaged and splinted his injuries. He was helped back to an underground campsite where there were sleeping bags, cooker and food. This took six hours to travel a distance which would take a fit caver one hour to cover. The injured person was stabilised further and one of the party made the six-hour journey out of the cave to alert other expedition members on the surface. A mountain radio was used to inform Police who then contacted local cave SAR Advisers. A Field Head Quarters was set up at Bulmer Lake. Field Controllers and Land SAR communicator teams and a base camp were put in place there.

Cavers from the Nelson area were contacted immediately and as an Air Force Iroquois was unavailable, local helicopters were used to ferry people and equipment to the base camp at Bulmer Lake. The initial report suggested that the injured caver would need to be carried out of the cave in a stretcher, an exercise requiring large numbers of cavers, so arrangements were made to fly people in from Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North and Wellington. Cavers from Christchurch and the West Coast drove to the road end and were then helicoptered into base camp. Three members from the expedition had taken food and more medical supplies into the injured caver.

By 1700 a party of three cavers including a Doctor was heading underground. A party with the specialised cave rescue stretcher and two teams putting in a michie phone wire followed this party. A michie phone is a single wire earth return telephone system, which allows communication in the cave. The party with the Doctor reached the injured caver by midnight and communications were established to a point half an hours caving from the underground campsite, by 1020 the next morning. The campsite where the injured man was resting is a 14 – 16 hour return trip from the surface for a fit caver, so it was decided to use the two teams (one michie phone and the advance team) to start moving the injured caver closer to the surface.

The Doctor felt that the caver had a fractured jaw and probable fractured left arm, with extensive bruising to both legs. The arm was splinted, the jaw and legs bandaged and Panadol and Voltaren given. The injured caver was able to hobble through the easier parts of the cave and assisted on short climbs. He required stretchering through low crawl-ways and hauling up pitches.

By the evening of the 1st January the rescue party had reached a second underground campsite, which was still 4 to 5 hours from the surface for a fit caver. Five people spent the night resting here while the remainder exited the cave. During this time other parties were involved with ferrying gear into and out of the cave and rigging the pitches to allow the injured caver to be hauled up them.

The injured caver's condition was improving and after a good nights rest he was able to exit the cave at 1600 on the 2nd. He was helicoptered to Nelson hospital where

Xrays revealed the only bone that was broken was his jaw, which needed plating.

It then took a further 24 hours to remove all the michie phone wire, ropes and other equipment from the cave.

The rescue was made easier by the fact that the National Cave SAREX had been held in the same cave

system in February. Although the exercise was in a different part of the cave the lessons we learnt about organising a large scale rescue from Bulmer were invaluable when it came to a real rescue situation.

Dr Michael Brewer
Cave SAR Nelson

Insurance

At the last Committee meeting questions were asked concerning several aspects of insurance and the cover provided for the mishaps that could befall SAR volunteers. These have subsequently been considered by the Police and a written reply has been received. This I will try to explain in plain language.

The first question asked if the Police will provide public liability cover for training as well as during an operation. An example of the need for "public liability cover" would be when a search team is camped next to a wheat field or pine forest and due to some reason, they set it alight. While we may strip and flog the perpetrators of this careless act, the aggrieved owner in wanting compensation for their loss could not and would have to discuss compensation with the Polices insurance broker. We now have it in writing that this is not only for the time of an operation but includes "official training courses as well". The key word for me is "official" so make sure your training programme has Police approval and then stick to it. If change is needed or some other event is to be held, discuss it with the Police first.

For damage or loss of SAR volunteers equipment the Police do not have an insurance policy. However payment from internal funds will be considered and is covered in clause S387 Loss or Damage to Personal Property contained in Police General Instructions which states:- *"1. Civilian volunteers who suffer loss or damage to personal property, not covered by Accident Compensation, while engaged in a Police controlled SAR operation or exercise, may be compensated by way of an ex-gratia payment in accordance with the merits of the claim".*

The sequence for any claim for personal equipment should be to approach your own insurance company first and then the Police if you are not satisfied.

A third question asked, was what happens if a SAR volunteer who holds their own personal insurance on their life or possessions, but the insurance is invalidated due to tasks the person is undertaking in SAR. In this instance, would the Police pay? An example of this would be a volunteer in a helicopter being used in an operation or for training which crashed, causing injury or worse to its occupants. As an "unscheduled flight" an insurance company may decline payment. The reply from the Police on this was:- *"Police are not legally liable to compensate the estates of SAR volunteers in the event of accidental death on a SAR activity as such accidents would normally be covered by ACC (or its replacement)". Whether a SAR member/volunteer made adequate disclosure to their insurer on taking out a life insurance policy would be a matter between the estate and the insurer. It is difficult to see what liability Police would have in this matter. My view (and that of our broker) is that the Police are not liable.*

The February 1998 edition of the News contains on page 8, an article on insurance which is worth revisiting. A point made there and reinforced by the quote above, was that when taking out insurance, **full disclosure** of your SAR activities is worthwhile as this may preclude any hassles if a claim has to be made.

John P Tristram
National Field Officer

Wellington SARTEST 1998

Well this year's SAREX was run as the annual SARTEST and was held in the Maungakotukutuku Valley behind Paraparaumu and was undoubtedly a major success. The team based skill stations followed by the combined stretcher exercise received very positive feedback from all those who attended. Timing of the exercise was considered ideal at one and a half

days with most people believing we could achieve all our goals in that time. The introduction of team assessment was also well received and our congratulations go to Wellington Team Seven, namely **Craig Duncan, Rodger McCormack, Jo McKenzie and Andrew Russell** who were awarded the **Brian Hunt Cup** for the best overall team at the SARTEST 1998.

The planning must have been inspirational, as a little over two weeks later we had Operation Bedford in Wainuiomata where there were remarkable similarities with the rescue phase as trained in at the SARTEST. Well done to all SAR members who took part in the search and rescue of Mark Bedford on the 23rd and 24th of November. Excellent application of skills learned.

This year's SARTEST had a number of new elements that we were trialing and overall the feedback has been very positive. The shorter time frame, better use of Friday evening, minimal travel time between skill stations and the combined group exercise were all considered positive improvements over previous years.

Given this feedback we plan to continue this approach in 1999.

Finally I would like to thank everyone who gave their time to plan, set up and run this year's SARTEST. A number of people gave up weekends to plan and lay-out the various skills stations for the weekend, without which it would not have been possible. Thank you also to the planning team of **Laurie Gallagher, Matthew Nolan, Mike Sheridan and Andy Warnes.**

Lastly to everyone who came along and made it all happen whether in HQ, as umpires, assessors, or patients and especially the SAR teams. Thank you, it was a great weekend.

Additional notes on SARTEST 1998

Objective

Fun, training, measure of current state of teams, competition.

Format

- Mixed teams of four persons. Teams picked by organisers to even out each team.
- Each team had an umpire with them all weekend.
- Each team went through four, two hour scenarios, each scenario stressing a different theme:-
 1. Night searching.
 2. First aid.
 3. Tracking.
 4. Rescue and rope skills.
- At each site there was also an umpire plus patient(s). Each umpire had a scoresheet not just covering the main skill but also other points like radio communications, team work etc.
- We ended the weekend with an unmarked rescue lumping three teams together with a decent gnarly stretcher carry.
- 12 teams took part. Eight from Wellington First Response, two from the Wairarapa and two from Levin.
- Staggered start time Friday night which concluded by 0130 hours. Saturday went from 0700 until 1700.

Results

- Quite evident who had not attended any regular training.
- 16 training days offered in 1998. Each person on first response attended over three training days
- One team out on its own.
- Rest of the teams closely grouped.
- Three teams trailed – lacked basic skills.
- One of the key components was leadership.

Feedback

- Overwhelmingly positive. (Even from our usual harsh critics)
- As teams were mixed no chance to rehearse – very realistic. Good viewpoint of general skill base.
- Good introduction for new members, so long as they were in an otherwise strong team.
- Fun. Very positive feedback.
- Emphasis all weekend was on positive points of feedback to teams, which was greatly appreciated.
- We have some highly skilled people out there who are very committed.

Mike Sheridan

Adviser Wellington District

Adviser List.

NZLSAR has undertaken the responsibility of annually updating and circulating the Land and Underground Advisers List. This list also includes details of Districts Air and Communications Contacts (Air Contacts or Air Advisers, the nomenclature and the training implications are being considered now). At the end of April a letter will be sent to each Police SAR Coordinator asking for details for their respective Advisers and Contacts. This is a time for SAR Organisations to review the performance of their senior people, the adequacy of their numbers and the need to introduce new people to the responsibilities of these various roles. It is also a time for the incumbents to personally consider their availability and commitment for the next year to search and rescue and to act as always "in the best interest of the victim". As per the timetable in Police General Instructions, a reply will be requested **No later than 30 June.**

The Dog Dosing Strip at Dunsandel

Remember that song. I don't think it has come around a second time, so if you do you are pretty old. This is actually not about dosing dogs (do they still do that?) but about my attendance at the 2nd Bush/Wilderness Search Dog Training and Assessment Course held over 4/8 December last year. The course was organised by **Markus Milne**, a very active Dunedin dog handler and SAR participant. After some "form filling" by Marcus the event was largely sponsored by a Hillary Commission Grant from the Dunedin City Council. The initiative in this regard by Markus and the generosity of the Council need to be acknowledged. With **Robert Gibson** and **Adrian Dance** he also acted as an instructor.

The venue was the Waiora Scout Camp, some 15 minutes drive from the centre of Dunedin. It has a large lecture hall and kitchen, a number of small huts with bunks and ablutions and is situated in several acres of lawn or mown areas with pockets of bush or pine forest through which meander several small streams. The surrounding hills rise some 1000 feet and varied between pine forest with some cut-over through to regenerating native bush. With the creature comforts well catered for and the varied topography and its cover, it is an ideal site for such a course.

There were 19 handlers and 19 dogs generally from the South Island, Murchison, Makarora, Queenstown to the more local from Dunedin. **Leone Ward**, who is involved in SAR and search dogs in Auckland, flew down to be part of the activities.

The course started on Friday evening with the usual welcome, introductions, rules (no dogs inside and clean up any deposits on the lawn areas) and going over the programme. Three video cameras and viewers had been borrowed and everyone was encouraged to use them, as a lot of learning can be done by retrospectively watching one's own performance. I was staying at **Roger Barrowclough's** and we left at a not too late hour of about 2230 hours to return to his place in town. Driving back I was perplexed as to the brilliant red sky to the south west and it took a moment to remember that despite the latish hour, it was only a few weeks from the longest day and this was "the deep South".

Next morning we returned to the camp and so began the day's instruction. The handlers were split up into several groups and with an instructor each handler/dog combination would have to perform a task of finding a person. I was the "rabbit" on more than one occasion and found it unnerving to run across lawns, through scrub, along the gravel road, hop over a stream and then hide behind a log, and only two minutes later be jumped on by an excited dog. The first time this happened the dog was Mishka, a delightful young German Shepherd trained by **Larry Charles** from Murchison (who if he wants to sell her I would take any time). There I was, all tucked up in a ball and over the log she came, gave me a quick nip and then shot off to tell Larry. It was the softest and most gently of mouthing and I think she only did it to get me to move. Talking to Larry afterwards he said in her training she has a ball to play with on "making the find" and as I didn't have anything to reward her she probably felt hard done by. It seemed that for all the dogs the training was done on a reward and play system.

Saturday afternoon **Clair Stafford**, a Dunedin veterinarian and search dog handler, gave a fascinating talk on canine first aid. Real handy stuff if a dog gets injured during an operation. She spoke of the usual first aid procedures of ensuring your own and the party's safety first, then the animal, checking its ABC's, and finally attending to the lesser items. The same steps as for humans. Clair spoke of the need for each handler to know the normal at rest pulse rate for their dog which is between 60 and 120 per minute. This is so a comparison can be made following any mishap to their dog. We were also instructed on how to gauge the animals circulation and possible blood loss by checking the capillary refill time (CRT) by exerting pressure on the gum above the upper canine tooth and then releasing it (similar to the blanching that occurs when you put pressure on a fingernail). The return to full pinkness should be one to two seconds.

Then came the tricky bit, there was a practical session to actually perform these checks. Outside we went and selected any dog. I ended up with Hoover. Now Hoover is a Bloodhound and at 51kg is only a little smaller and lighter than my wife. When Hoover yawns it was like looking down a drippy, wet, pink Mt Victoria

Tunnel. To take the pulse, it seems the best place is the femoral artery that is situated deep in the groin. So after rolling Hoover over on his back and much groping around, there it was, a steady beat. Or was it, no pulse, I must have lost it so felt around, nothing, nothing and then there it was full and strong. And all the while I swear the damn dog had a huge grin on its face. But it was a lesson for all who struck this sudden lack of a heartbeat. Some dogs have sinus arrhythmia which means after several beats and synchronous with their breathing, the heart pauses for several moments. Fascinating. Then we stood our dogs up and did the CRT test. After cranking Hoover's mouth open and finding his canine tooth in the copious saliva I discovered his gum skin on my side was black (which is not unusual) and so I was unable to measure the refill time. Not to worry, around the other side, open wide, to find a nice pink gum, apply and release the pressure and my goodness he is a healthy dog. Who needed a shower every night?

Clair afterwards explained Hoover's name to me. As a Bloodhound, his nose is a huge olfactory gland connected to a brain, that doesn't necessarily make him very smart other than interpreting the scents in front of him. Like the vacuum cleaner, Hoover would trot along for hours hardly lifting his head off the ground and follow that what he had been tasked to do.

Three of us were assigned to set up a trail early on Saturday afternoon that included two paddocks connected by a bridge over a stream. In plan view it looked something like a figure eight with the narrow waist being the bridge. One of us walked down the middle of the first field, trip trap, trip trap over the rickety bridge and then down the middle of the second disturbing a picnicking couple on the way. The other two of us walked the different parameters of the first field, over the bridge looking out for the troll under it, around the second and we all finished at the end of it. Over a fence and a vehicle took us back to camp. In my trail after the bridge I walked past several taps which had obviously been recently used by campers, a toilet block and then a hundred yards further on I went through a camp site with several tents spread over 40 metres.

Early that evening the weather turned from a windy but sunny day to one of those downpours one expects on the West Coast. And it went on and on. Towards 2100 hours we were driven back to the end of our trail end and sat and waited in the car as the rain drummed down. Three dogs were individually given an article of our clothing and set to follow the eight-hour old scent. All three got around the first paddock and over the

bridge but two lost it shortly thereafter. So as the dog would be able to finish the trail by finding us, we were instructed on a VHF radio well before their anticipated arrival, when to get out of the shelter of the car and hide at the end of the trail. My turn came and crouching in the long grass behind a willow stump, I peeked from my hiding place and Bayley (a second Bloodhound) was within 50 metres of me, so I ducked down again to be out of sight. After a long and rather nervous pause I looked up and he had gone back down the paddock. At the last moment he had lost my trail, confused with the three of us travelling the paddock, the picnicking couples scent, the campers, the rain and wind. The second paddock was short grass with a fence and then long grass on the other side and it was interesting to see how each dog ended up hard against the fence. The scent from all the passers-by had blown across, seemingly held there by the "wall" of long grass and accumulated as a pool. The result was disappointing in that none of the dogs actually "found us". But they had all gone from our starting point, got around the first paddock and over the bridge on a eight-hour trail in heavy rain before losing it. Certainly a competent handler could have given the likelihood of it being the missing person's trail and the direction of travel. And so in still bucketing rain we left them to it for the evening.

Sunday was more exercises and laying of trails and then in the afternoon Roger and I presented a paper that touched on the structure of NZLSAR, the problems being faced, the needs the Committees sees to be filled and the future direction of land SAR. Pretty boring stuff to people that probably only want to get out there "and find somebody".

Early Monday morning, short trails were laid and dogs searched as a warm-up for the assessments that were to be made that afternoon. After morning tea, **Ross Gordon** gave a lecture and some practical work on Track and Clue Awareness. It was about then that Roger had to get back to his office and I needed to get ready for my return to Wellington. So with much barking we said our farewells.

Some observations.

All the dogs were incredibly friendly, which cannot always be said for the Police SAR dogs. This means they may be more useful in raising moral in either the searchers or any lost person found, as well as just being "plain searcher friendly". In the whole time there I heard one small snarl when one Bloodhound owner was sitting under a tree and the other Bloodhound

came over and licked him. The owner's Bloodhound got a bit peeved and said so. No licking my boss!

I am 100% convinced that each SAR Organisation should have ready access to at least one assessed operationally ready search dog and handler. Search dogs are not the be all and end all for SAR problems, but its worth noting in comparison that human searchers have off days or are sometimes unsuccessful. They are a vital arrow in any Operations Managers (O.M., a bit of Coordinated Incident Management System, CIMS jargon) quiver of search options.

To get and keep an operational dog and handler is a bit like marriage. The relationship needs to be nurtured, there will be some highs and lows and is not to be entered into lightly. A SAR organisation having found a person dedicated enough to become a handler will need to help, support and encourage the

handler and the dog on what will be long journey of discovery and learning for them both.

A handler and their dog while operational will also need support. The dog by both sound and its actions, sometimes extremely subtle, conveys information to the handler. Learning to interpret the dog's communications is part of the overall learning curve for both and can require intense concentration by the handler. A person or persons accompanying the two of them, equipped with navigation, communications, first-aid etc., makes good sense. So does practising these techniques on training days. In fact search dogs should be fully integrated in not only the organisation's operational planning but in the training programme as well.

John P Tristram
National Field Officer

Certificates and ID Cards

Following requests from around the country, NZLSAR has had printed certificates and ID cards.

There seems to be an increasing need to accumulate evidence of attendance to show what training an individual has been exposed to and these certificates are a step in this direction. NZLSAR is looking to have produced a suitable folder to take these certificates and with pro-forma's that can be filled in as to operations attended and other relevant information of their SAR activities. What we have got produced so far are:-

- Joint NZLSAR and Emergency Management Limited "***Has completed a course of instruction in ---***" These certificates will be issued at all NZLSAR sponsored courses run by EML and have a space for them to be signed by a District Adviser as well as the instructor.
- NZLSAR "***Has completed a course of instruction in ---***". These can be issued by District of Local SAR Committees at the completion of some training course.
- NZLSAR "***In appreciation for --- years of service***". These have been produced to meet the

request by SAR organisations that at intervals they wish to acknowledge there members contribution of years of service. Organisations may wish to hold a ceremony at regular intervals and issue this certificate for ten, fifteen, twenty or whatever years of membership.

- ID Cards. The tramping club I am a member of, issues annually a small card that confirms this. On producing the card at a number of local shops I get a discount on purchases. The NZLSAR ID cards with the logo and national contact details has spaces for a persons name, the issuing organisation, date and other information as you wish.

All these items can be obtained by contacting myself, details at the end of the News. Contact me quick and beat the rush.

John P Tristram
National Field Officer

Police Search and Rescue Co-ordinators Course

The Training Directorate (Research and Development Group, Royal New Zealand Police College) in conjunction with Police National Headquarters has completed a review on Police

training in search and rescue. As a result of the review it has been decided to structure a new course for Police search and rescue co-ordinators.

The course will be two weeks in length and will be held at the Royal New Zealand Police College. The first course will be from the 10th until the 21st of May 1999.

The aim of the course is to upskill Police search and rescue co-ordinators in both land and marine SAR management so they can demonstrate and apply modern search techniques and principles.

A maximum of 16 trainees has been set for the first course.

The course will consist of land (6 days) and marine (4 days) segments. The land will be run by Mr Ross

Gordon of Emergency Management Ltd and the Marine by Senior Sergeant Alaister Dawson, the Queensland State Search and Rescue Co-ordinator.

The course was structured following a request from Inspector John Meads, National Police Search and Rescue Co-ordinator, for Police SAR training to be reviewed. The review was carried out by Senior Sergeant Gerard Prins from the Research and Development Group.

Senior Sergeant Gerard Prins
Research and Development Group

Editors Comments

To **Michael, Mike and Gerard** a big thank you for your articles. To those who proof read and check the spelling and grammar, thank you also. Copy for the **June News** is most welcome and the close-off date is **Friday 28 May 1999**. Articles on gear, SAR training or operations are most welcome. Please either mail as neatly hand-written, printed hard copy or on a disc to **NZLSAR, PO Box 12081, Thorndon, Wellington**. Alternatively email it to **tristram.nzlsar@xtra.co.nz** ..

Regards **John P Tristram** National Field Officer