
NZLSAR News

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For some time now Wellington District has been developing a SAR team comprising a number of runners. Their task is to quickly cover a track system either in the day or at night to see that the missing party is not on or near it. They have also been used to get medical assistance in at night when a helicopter was unable to fly. Accordingly the following article, received with thanks from the NZ Orienteering magazine, is an interesting addition to this concept.

EGMONT ORIENTEERS TRANSFER SKILLS TO SEARCH AND RESCUE

As fairly new members of the Taranaki Land Search and Rescue we were invited to put a team in the local SAR competition. Graham Maddern, Suzanne Scott, Nick Collins, Robert Newbrook, myself and Jay Patterson as leader, entered as a team and prepared a **VERY vague plan**. It had to be vague as none of us had been on a search before, although a couple had been to an exercise or training!!

In the past the competition format has been set to test bushcraft type skills like map reading, first aid, fire lighting, stretcher making and carrying. I had inside information that the format would be different this year – and it sure was!

The Police SAR squad were selected to run the event and they decided to test us on very different skills.

SO nine teams headed out with our Police Markers in tow and with a decidedly sketchy idea of “what to do”. Our marker was Mike Barnett

The scenario was that a man in his 60's had gone rabbit shooting early in the morning and hadn't come home. We had been called in to track him from the last known sighting. Sounded fairly reasonable, so as we headed to the spot of the last sighting we modified the **VERY vague plan** to suit the new format. Graham had done the tracking course last year so he was the obvious candidate to take over when we found a very clear boot print in the mud – right beside our start point – how convenient!! All this time Mike, our marker, was trailing along, listening and marking us on planning, leadership and a prepared list of other skills.

Graham did a fine job of the tracking and we were soon on the scene of "the accident". Jay jumped the fence to find a headless body (actually a pair of overalls stuffed with shredded paper). She racked her brains on how to do first aid when there is no head. The **VERY vague plan** was no help. Nick meanwhile was making the shotgun safe, Suzanne was scouting about for other clues and I was trying to report progress on the radio. At this point I was instructed to turn off the radio and communicate in writing with the Marker – these guys really like to change the rules! While this was happening a reporter and photographer from the local Daily News were in fine form trying to take pictures of the body and asking the usual nosy questions. Jay eventually sent them packing then sent Nick and Robert back to the start area to collect a body bag - while the rest of us were making a detailed record of the site for the Coroner. The last task was to bundle the "body" into the bag and carry everything back to the start area where we were asked some final questions before all the Markers went into a huddle to sort out placings.

As we waited for the results it was obvious that we Orienteers are a strange breed. Nick's orienteering tights came in for some scrutiny! After all, most of the other teams were the hardy climbers, trampers, deerstalkers, "been on many searches and know it all" brigade - so we had few illusions about winning.

BUT - we surprised everyone by winning the event. It really goes to show how far you can get with common sense, team work and a one day tracking course. In the final count up we lost only 2 marks (for dealing with the press!) and the next team lost 4 marks. There had been quite a number of comments when we started about the number of women in our team but during the lunch that followed the presentation we noticed those men eating their words! ! !

Roll on next year so we can defend our title.

Can your Orienteers be a useful part of the Search and Rescue organisation ?

Sure can! We put ourselves forward to the local SAR as being useful for :

- map and compass skills
- fast reconnaissance
- mountain/bush track and hut checks
- thorough searches of city parks and reserves (which we have mapped and know intimately)

To date we have not been used on a callout, but I believe that is because the majority of the advisers don't know us or our capabilities. Well we changed that!

Jacqui Sinclair
New Plymouth

An Award With A Difference

On 26th July 1997 **Laurie Cobb** of Thames received the New Zealand Land Search and Rescue Award. Laurie had recently retired as an Adviser having been involved with SAR from its inception in Thames and with searches for the Police before that beginning about 1951. Laurie had served for several years as a member of the Police, many of those years in his home town of Thames.

The function was held in the Thames Fire Brigade Hall and was attended by SAR

members, Civil Defence staff and others numbering about sixty.

Unbeknown to Laurie a large number of people including some involved with SAR operations that he had been part of some years back and other acquaintances were contacted and were present as "surprise guests". These people were formed into groups and presented in the form of "This is Your Life ". This group numbered a further sixty or so and many had travelled considerable distances to be present.

The first group was family and comprised his son, a daughter and three brothers, a sister and their families, in fact just about all of Laurie's relations living in New Zealand.

This was followed by two men who with two others as thirteen year old scouts had been the subject of a four day search in August 1961

Then there was a group of locals who were SAR members involved in the DC3 air crash search and recovery in July 1963. Laurie was a Policeman at the time and was in charge of body recovery at the crash site.

And a lady now seventy-two told how in 1970 she had been a patient on a prolonged stretcher carry that went long into the night. She recalled that, having broken her ankle, twenty-eight men arrived to carry her out. Her story contained much humour as she said that she has not had so much attention before or since and that "at one time there

were so many hands on my leg I was wondering if I was going to have enough leg".

A group of Laurie's former hunting mates from the 1950's were present as were a couple of former Police colleagues.

A large number of old photographs and newspaper clippings were on display and there was much reminiscing of searches, many of which took place before a many of the present SAR membership were even born.

And the Grand Finale for the evening was the presentation of the much deserved New Zealand Land SAR Award by National Secretary Roscoe Tait of Auckland.

A good night was had by all and a fitting tribute paid to a former stalwart of SAR

John Cassidy
Region Two Representative

Dunedin Urban Search Course 16/17 August 1997

I get paid to be a Policeman. The time I spend on search and rescue is stolen from my staff, my family and the community I work in. Everyone else I know who gives up time to be involved in SAR has a similar story. It is a joy to have someone like Emergency Management Limited organise quality training especially when it concerns an area of SAR that we often get calls for but seldom practice, namely a urban search course.

The young, the elderly and dependants are the main group of people that initiate an urban search. How many people does it take to search one hundred houses in four hours? What type of maps and aerial photos are best to use when managing an urban search? How can we best utilise the eyes and ears of the public in the area? What authority do we have to search private properties? How do we overcome safety issues when searching factories? Who is going to search the stormwater system?

An urban search can be a very public humiliation or a triumph, it depends on your pre-planning, your management team and your training. The media moves very fast, live pictures on NZ wide news are common. Chances are in an urban setting, family, friends, Police staff and others have been looking for several hours before SAR is called in. These resources need to be harnessed and managed. None of these challenges are specific to urban search but the management response can be quite different to a wilderness search.

Dunedin SAR has prepared "risk profiles" on three people that we have had to mount an urban search for more than once. The profile includes personal and family details, a photo and previous history which is "lost person behaviour" specific to that person. The "risk profile" is invaluable when it comes to dealing with the next search. So far other methods of dealing with "regular customers" have been discarded because they are unprintable and inhumane.

Search management in an urban environment has a new set of problems to overcome. The collecting, analysis and dissemination of information from many sources is a major one. The volume of information can be tenfold to a wilderness search so having that function separate from your Search Manager is essential in anything but the smallest search.

The Inquiry Team also need more emphasis in an urban search than is normally required in a wilderness environment. Media involvement will generate lots of leads that need to be followed up and many will not need a Search Team. Logistic requirements and a media liaison person should be looked at early.

Identifying functions or positions that you will need to fill is part of your pre-plan, filling them with the right people is part of the your training plan.

A Search Manager is responsible for any function not delegated. I have seen (and been) very busy Search Managers who were

quite ineffective because they did not identify what needs to be done and get the right people to do it.

The practical lessons learnt from our urban search course include; search teams of three people work best; the need to be well identified and our paper work for both Field Teams and at Search Base needs to be updated. It took ten people two hours to search thirty houses. Area maps and aerial photos are easy to get from the Council and are good to work with, but don't have house numbers on them.

Urban search training and pre-planning has been largely overlooked until now. Our weekend course with EML helped us adapt our wilderness search techniques to the urban environment which will be in the best interest of our future customers!!

Sergeant Brian Benn
Police SAR Coordinator
Otago District

Is it a matter of mathematics or dodgy information

In May this year, Thames SAR Advisers were contacted at 12 30 am and advised that two six year olds were missing on a farm property about eighty kilometres away on the Coromandel peninsular. The pair had gone for a walk the previous afternoon. The farm backs onto the bush clad range and has a lot of bush and scrub on the property. The weather was bad with a lot of rain. A large stream and the creeks on the property were reported to be running high and dirty.

An immediate response was required and by 3 am several car loads of keen searchers had travelled the winding road and arrived at the scene to be told that the missing pair were not six year olds but were sixty year olds. However a Search Base was established in the woolshed and the search teams set out. At 6 am, before daylight, Base received a call on the radio that the missing couple, a man and wife had been found, with the wife somewhat affected by the wet and cold.

Thames SAR now have a quandary. From six to sixty is 54 years. Is this the longest search in history??? Or is this another example of the dogged tenacity and commitment of so many volunteers for SAR throughout New Zealand.

John Cassidy
Adviser
Te Awamutu District

What the NFO did on his holiday

While overseas, and with the Committee's approval, I arranged and met SAR practitioners in two other countries.

The first was a visit to Dr Anthony Jones at the University in Bangor, North Wales. Anthony has a CV in mountain rescue that I can only stand in awe of and he was recently awarded an MBE for services to SAR. Becoming a member of the Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Organisation in 1964 he has held the positions of Committee member, Team Leader and Chairman subsequently. Other management positions held include being on the North Wales Mountain Rescue Association and the Mountain Rescue Council. With an involvement in over 850 SAR operations, his is a formidable record indeed.

When I went to see him he had just returned from a visit to Skip Stoffel in the States where they had spent time re-writing the "Search is an Emergency" manual. My wife Pat and I arrived at his home on Thursday evening and by the time we left the following Monday we had done a lot of talking and even managed to get in a bit of walking.

We visited Bryn Poeth the OVMRO search base. It is a lovely old stone cottage in the shadow of Tryfan, a most impressive peak. The place is kitted out as a SAR base with full communications, sleeping and catering facilities as well as first aid facilities, gear room for climbing/rescue equipment and a garage for their own rescue vehicle. As a completely voluntary organisation relying on public donations they have worked very hard to achieve what they have. The base is manned every weekend and deals with up to sixty incidents a year.

We were fortunate on the Saturday we were there that the Police forces of England and Wales were having an event called the Police Sevens. In teams of four they have to climb/run/walk over the seven peaks in the Snowdonia National Park. It is a race that

takes several hours in mountainous country and with over fifty teams entered, the chance for an accident or hypothermia is very real. The OVMRO takes on the task of providing a medical service and Pat and I were assigned to such a team. We climbed up for a bit over an hour to a saddle between two of the peaks and although our position was some four hours into the race, with warm temperatures and pretty fit cops, our role was very low key. It was interesting to see a couple of staggerers being assessed as to their fitness to continue and I should also mention the expert bandaging for a few with cuts and bruises.

On our return to the base, word came in that a climber had taken a rock in the face and was seriously injured. When the informants were finally rounded up it was interesting sitting in on the interviews. They had received the message third hand and as a person had been reported being admitted to hospital with similar injury, the question became were they one and the same or had there been two accidents. After an hour or so of discussion with the local hospital and consideration of the information from the interviews it was decided it was the one incident and no further action was needed. An opportunity that evening to talk in the relaxed atmosphere of the local pub to the officiating doctor, Royal Air Force SAR and OVMRO personnel was well worthwhile, even with the headache next morning.

My other visit was to the Mountain Rescue Unit of the Civil Aid Service in Hong Kong. On Friday Pat and I met Mr FUNG Kwok-him MBE, the Deputy Commissioner (Operations) and Chief Staff Officer as well as several of the CAS and MRU senior officers at a lunch reception put on for us. Mr FUNG also gave a briefing on how the CAS system works. It is a government department of one hundred and twenty-four paid professionals who coordinate the activities of some three thousand volunteers and a similar number of cadets. The role played by these volunteers in the Hong Kong society range widely from

youth group supervision, digging people out from landslides and collapsed buildings, crowd control and of course rescuing those in need in the outdoors. Hong Kong is probably thought of as a place of high rise buildings but in fact I think up to eighty percent is in natural cover with some extremely precipitous hills around the three thousand foot mark. With a population of about seven million and walking in the various Country Parks becoming more popular, a steady increase on the thirty or forty operations per year can be anticipated. The training for the seventy members of the MRU consists of a two hours each Thursday evening and a Sunday each month. As well each of the seven teams is rostered on "standby duty" every Sunday and Public Holiday from 1300 to 2100 hours.

We were invited to attend the Training Centre on the Sunday and there met several more of the MRU personnel, saw some of the equipment and visited the Operations Room. We discussed a range of issues and of particular interest was the recently instituted "Training Logbook" for new members, a copy of which I was able to secure.

Of interest was the organisation audit they have every two years to see if and where improvements can be made. Previously done by the RAF they are still committed to providing the best service for their customers and having called for tenders internationally, will have the audit performed in November this year.

John P Tristram
National Field Officer

1996 / 97 SAR STATISTICS

The annual SAR statistics have now been distributed, and if you wish to view them I suggest you contact your District Police SAR Coordinator, all of whom have received a copy.

John Tristram has shown me a newspaper clipping he brought back from his recent trip to Europe which shows that ninety-five people died climbing in the French Alps this summer. This compares with only thirty-eight fatalities in New Zealand land SAR incidents during the last financial year and of those only five were climbing accidents. The total of thirty-eight is down a bit on recent years, where as a general rule of thumb we talk of about fifty, or one a week, land-related SAR deaths.

In the 1995/96 financial year total land fatalities in NZ were sixty-one, and here again only five were climbing accidents.

In the 1994/95 year, of the fifty-one land fatalities, six came under the heading of climbing.

Total SAR operations for 1996/97 remain much the same at nine hundred and eighty-one. Land SAR's numbered four hundred

and eighty, and water totalled five hundred and one. In the 1995/96 year a total of nine hundred and fifty-one, comprised of four hundred and eighty-three land and four hundred and sixty-eight water. The year before that, one thousand and one SAR operations were made up of five hundred and eleven land and four hundred and ninety water SAR's.

One area in which there was some considerable variation in the statistics was the hours spent by civilian volunteers on land SAR operations. This financial year just finished these hours totalled fifteen thousand and eight hundred. The year before that they were twenty-two thousand, and in the 94/95 year were twenty-one thousand, seven hundred. Would anybody like to hazard an educated guess at why that might have been?

It might be somewhat in keeping with the total cost of land SAR operations which in 1996/97 was only \$998,500 compared to \$1,140,000 in 95/96, and \$1,604,000 in 94/95.

Inspector John Meads
National SAR Coordinator

NZLSAR AGM and Committee meeting 16 August 1997

The AGM was a quiet affair with the Annual Report and Financial Reports being accepted without comment. However the "owners" of NZLSAR still feel that the Annual Performance Report needs to be done by an independent agent. The NFO has been asked to investigate possible options and report back to the Committee. The continuing restructuring of the Police was noted and NZLSAR is not proposing any changes to its representative boundaries until the situation has stabilised.

The Committee meeting agenda was extensive and it was a very busy day. Items included:-

Chairman's and Secretaries Seminar

This seminar will be held at the Police College in conjunction with the November National meeting. The NZLSAR Committee will be held on Saturday and the seminar will start that evening and continue through Sunday. Attendees will be welcome to attend both the national meeting and the seminar as it will give a better understanding of the business and issues to be discussed at the seminar.

Agenda items are requested from the Regions as this is an opportunity for them to reinforce the reports from the Regional Representatives.

Funding and training.

At the time of the meeting the Police had not finalised their budgets and there was no indication of the level of funding being offered to NZLSAR. However the Police in recognising the difficulties this presented to NZLSAR, offered a 25% interim grant which was accepted. Subsequently the Police have announced that the total grant will be

\$103,000. This will fund, this financial year, about half the tasks that the Committee feels require to be done to be aiming for the goal of being an effective and efficient organisation. Accordingly some drastic pruning of the work schedules and redrafting of the budget will need to be done.

ID Cards

The production of these cards has now begun. The Committee reaffirmed its policy that they only be issued to those Advisers who had been on a Advisers Standards Workshop. The application forms and other details can be found in the August 1997 NZLSAR News or by contacting the NFO.

Application for Lotteries General Grant

The LGB has written to NZLSAR declining to fund research by Otago University on NZLSARs behalf of Lost Person Behaviour using Case Base Reasoning, presumably on the ground that NZLSAR and its members had not put enough finances into it. This is disappointing as it seems to overlook the huge amount of time and expertise that the volunteers give so generously. As the technique of Case Based Reasoning as applied to the potential whereabouts of a missing person seems to have much to offer SAR, the Committee is still considering how to fund the project.

There were many other items discussed but as I am running out of room I would suggest you contact a Committee member if you wish to know more.

John P Tristram

National Field Officer

Editors Comments

To **Jacqui, John C, Brian and John M** a big thank your for your articles. To those who proof read, check the spelling or grammar, thank you also.

Copy for the December News is most welcome and the close-off date is Friday 21 November. 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** . Even a phone call and a verbal description to me if you are diffident about writing has produced articles so please contact me as the merits of this newsletter is entirely in the hands of the contributors.

Regards **John P Tristram**