

Canterbury District SAREX March 11<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> 2016.  
Hawdon Shelter, Arthurs Pass, Canterbury.  
Evaluation conducted by S/Sgt Jo HOLDEN, PNHQ

## **INTRODUCTION**

Peter Crowther aged 55 years went missing from his Christchurch address on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2013. His car was located near the Hawdon Shelter on July 7<sup>th</sup>; despite an extensive search and related investigations, Peter remains missing.

The Coroner's findings were that Crowther died on or about June 14 2013 at or near Arthurs Pass and that his body is presumed lost or irrecoverable.

This SAREX was designed to review the information collected during the initial search, conduct further enquires and develop a plan to locate either Peter's remains or any items of his property.

The exercise consisted of 2 phases:

- Pre-exercise; and
- The SAREX proper

## **PRE EXERCISE OBJECTIVES**

- Review the original files:
- Interview family, partner, ex wife, daughters, brother, friends and work associates in an effort to further develop the MP profile;
- Develop a plan including taskings for the SAREX.

## **SAREX OBJECTIVES:**

- Complete a helicopter safety briefing for all field team members;
- Execute the developed SAREX Plan in accordance with the LandSAR Response Guidelines;
- Provide an opportunity to give newer IMT members experience in the IMT with mentoring from experienced search managers;
- Debrief the SAREX – hot debrief of the IMT immediately after, and cold debrief of all attendees by way of Survey Monkey in the week after the SAREX;
- Capture, document and socialise the findings and lessons learnt.

## **EVALUATION – PRE-SAREX**

A group of 12 people from several of the Canterbury LSAR groups and Police conducted an extensive review of the original files and re-interviewed members of Peter's family. These enquiries reinforced assumptions from the original search that Peter intentionally headed into the wilderness near Hawdon Shelter to die, either at his own hand or from the elements.

The Search area was segmented into 40 searchable chunks and taskings were written for each of the chunks; the planning team did not think all 40 tasks would be covered in a weekend, even with a helicopter, so the taskings were prioritised. He recommended that one

area in particular (East Hawdon) not be searched in this SAREX (presumably due to the steep & gorgy nature of East Hawdon Stream).

The taskings reflected the scenarios.

While the segmentation process did not quite follow the practice taught in MTIR, it achieved the same purpose.

## **EVALUATION – SAREX**

### **Done well:**

Helicopter safety briefing was conducted for all field team members (excluding hover load);

ICP was established at Hawdon Shelter using the Police Mobile base and AREC vehicles;

IMT was established for each operational period, CIMS positions appointed

IAP was written for each Operational Period, realistic operational periods were established;

Phased IMT handovers were completed using GSMEAC briefing format;

Focus on Safety including comprehensive Risk Management Plan, No Duff Plan, safety briefings, the appointment of a dedicated Safety Officer and resting of the teams overnight;

LandSAR SMS forms were used (except Take5), taskings signed by each Team Leader

IMT knew where each team was at all times

All 19 Teams were deployed within a short time-frame;

Comms plan for helo deployment of repeaters was quickly adapted to deployment of repeater by foot on Friday; teams were all required to carry HF radios

Comms worked better than expected, use of IPSTAR with microwave link explored.

Comprehensive IMT hot debrief was conducted on Sunday that recognised what went well and what areas could be improved

### **Overlooked/omitted**

Helicopter hover load and Ground Crew Training Record requirements were not met (lack of time?)

### **Observations/Improvements**

Consider using larger scale maps e.g. 1:25000 on A3;

Goal was a bit vague and likely to be unachievable – “locate Peter Crowther”

IMT did not analyse the original file and additional information to further build the missing person profile.

A bit more practise developing the IAP would be beneficial – especially around the development of SMART objectives;

Practise developing a Demobilisation Plan – especially for getting 19 teams out of the field.

More policing of Team equipment prior to deployment – some teams went into the field without overnight packs and thus had to be brought back to the ICP at the end of day 1;

The IC needs to have the final say re what taskings to do and what not to do – a team was deployed to East Hawdon despite this not being a recommended task; this put them out of any useful tasking for the remainder of the SAREX.

There was a certain degree of radio “Chinese Whispers” (this was recognised)

Stay on top of the latest iteration of the NZSAR forms from the website – they are updated regularly...

To summarise, this was an ambitious challenging SAREX which met its objectives and provided a range of learning opportunities, particularly for members of the IMT.

### **Senior Sergeant Jo Holden**

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# **Canterbury District SAR Ex Exercise CROWTHER 2016**

**12<sup>th</sup> 13th March 2016**

## **FINAL REPORT**

## **Introduction**

The Canterbury Police District major land search and rescue exercise (SAREX) for the 2015-16 year was held at the Hawdon Shelter, Arthurs Pass on the 12<sup>th</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> of March 2016.

The exercise involved approximately 80 LandSAR personnel and 30 Police SAR Squad personnel.

Due to the large numbers of participants we wanted an exercise that would engage everyone, also with having running Rogaine style SAR exercises for several years we wanted focus on CIMS, IMT and Search Management as a component of the exercise.

A cold case was chosen as a basis for the SAREX, there were additional benefits gained from a historic search being used for a SAREX, these included a peer review of the original search file, a review of the missing person file and the visiting of family, witnesses and friends, this allowed any additional information taken into account and be included in the planning of the SAREX.

A team of Police SAR Squad and Canterbury LSAR arrived to the SAR Ex location on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup>, this was to set up the IMT Base, accommodation and Communication structure.

We had good participation at the SAREX, this was possibly due to the exercise being based on a real search and actual events.

## **Objectives**

The objectives of the SAREX were:

- a) *To evaluate the original SAR file (peer review), and plan an exercise search operation based on the updated information.*
- b) *To mentor and train potential Police SAR and LSAR volunteers in IMT roles.*
- c) *To complete an operational IMT handover and briefing.*
- e) *To teach and practice helicopter safety to the standard required by local operators.*
- f) *To train and refresh field teams in a range of search techniques.*
- g) *To ensure appropriate safety plans, assessments and briefings are completed and maintained throughout the exercise.*

## **Scenario**

The search is based on the cold case operation for despondent missing person Peter Crowther aged 55 years, he went missing from his Christchurch address on the 14<sup>th</sup> of June 2013. His car was located near the Hawdon Shelter, Arthurs



2. Try to deploy teams early, for an exercise of this size consider staged deployments to accommodate those that arrive early.
3. Consider smaller segments for search teams in densely vegetated locations.
4. Have a more centralised base layout linking catering, accommodation and IMT
5. Separating the IMT, the Mobile Police Station was not big enough for the CIMS structure, additional working space was needed for Operations.
6. Having a separate area for information and registration.
7. Integrate Police SAR Squad with LSAR field teams.

### **Police funding**

Police supplied catering for the exercise for the ICP, ration packs for field teams, final BBQ, Kidson Lodge and refreshments at a cost of [REDACTED], including the mobile Police Station (truck command vehicle) used as the ICP.

### **NZSAR funding**

The funding was applied as follows:

*Helicopter hire*

[REDACTED]

*Planning, staffing, stationary and printing*

**Total**

[REDACTED]

### **Effect of funding**

The funding contributed positively to the running of the SAR Ex, it allowed us to:

- To train and mentor prospective IMT personal in Search Management and CIMS roles.
- To train and refresh field teams on search methods for an unresponsive person.
- Hold a comprehensive helicopter safety brief and deploy many of the teams quickly into the field, all the participants were signed off as having received the helicopter safety briefing.
- To supply a ration pack to all field team participants.

**Customer Invoice Note**

A customer invoice note for the SAR Ex has been previously forwarded to NZSAR.  
This came to a total [REDACTED]

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Simmonds', is positioned above the typed name.

Phil Simmonds  
Sergeant C661  
SAR/DVI Coordinator - Canterbury  
18<sup>th</sup> May 2016

## Appendix A SAR Ex images



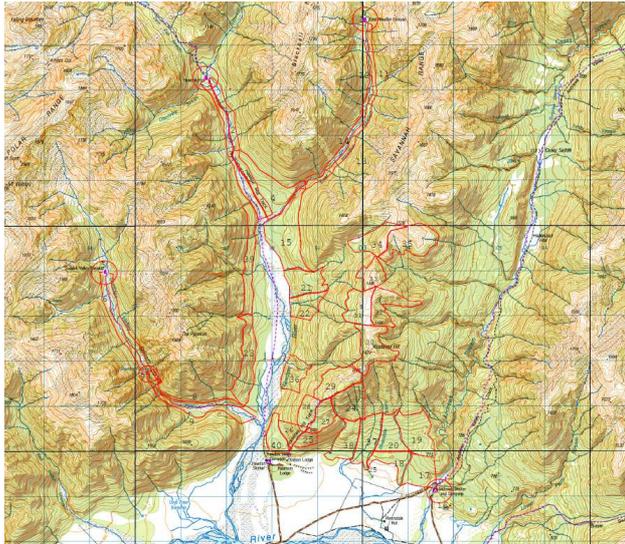
Saturday morning general briefing



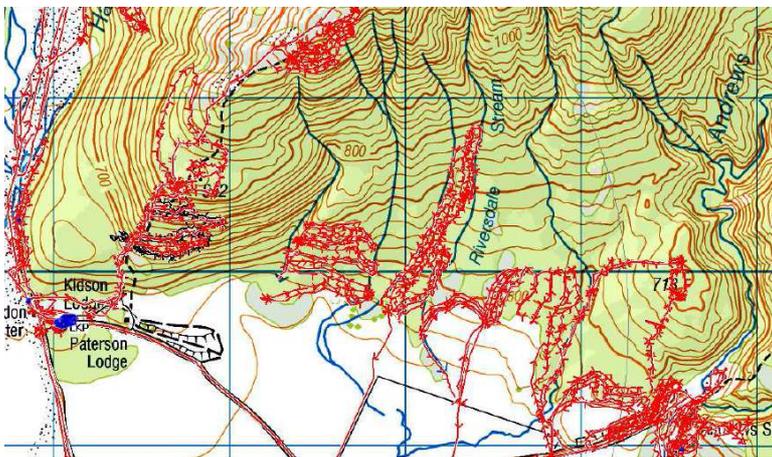
Team briefing



Helicopter safety briefing



Planning area segments



Sample of track logs