

## **NZSAR Gold Award**

This was awarded for the most significant contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue region in 2011.

### **Dean Herrick, Geoff Taylor, and Stephen Smith, from the Hawke's Bay Helicopter Rescue Trust**

**For their outstanding efforts during the rescue of the yacht Kawa, on 11 October 2011**

On 11 October 2011 the skipper of the yacht Kawa advised that he was in difficulty in a position 60 nautical miles east of Napier. His yacht was taking on water and had lost its sails. The Hawke's Bay Rescue Helicopter was tasked to assist, and carried out the rescue in extremely difficult environmental conditions – strong wind, heavy seas, and failing light.

When the helicopter arrived, the crew determined it would be unsafe to winch the skipper from the yacht. They asked the skipper to get into his life raft, which was tethered to the yacht. This was the best option given the weather conditions to ensure a safer winching operation. However, the wind pushed the life raft back alongside the yacht.

The crew then decided to lower Stephen from the helicopter into the water, and for him to swim to the life raft. Once there, Stephen briefed the skipper on how he would be connected to the hoist and winched to the helicopter. The skipper told Stephen that he was both anxious and was a non-swimmer.

When the winching operation started, the skipper and Stephen got tangled up in the tether rope between the yacht and the life raft, due to the extreme conditions. In the attempts to untangle themselves, the skipper ended up in the water, and Stephen was dunked twice. Eventually Stephen was winched into the helicopter, and then the skipper was located in the water. Stephen was again lowered and managed to attach himself to the skipper, they were then winched back into the helicopter. The helicopter returned to Napier on its reserve fuel supply. Both the skipper and Stephen were admitted to hospital.

This award recognises the outstanding combined efforts and bravery of Dean, Geoff, and Stephen, in locating and rescuing the skipper in extremely difficult conditions. Geoff was unable to be at the award function, and his award was collected on his behalf by Dean.

## **NZSAR Certificates of Achievement**

These were awarded for an important contribution to search and rescue in the New Zealand Search and Rescue Region, either during 2011, or over an extended period.

### **Nelson Colyer, from Coastguard Canterbury**

**For his efforts during the rescue of the tug Rakanui, on 23 April 2011**

On 23 April 2011 the old wooden tug Rakanui issued a 'pan pan' radio call informing listeners that there was a safety problem on board. It was three miles off the coast of Motunau, taking on water, and in imminent danger of sinking. The Rescue Coordination Centre tasked the Coastguard vessel Pub Charity Canterbury Rescue to assist, and it arrived on scene an hour later. The tug was low in the water and wallowing dangerously, which indicated the seriousness of the situation to the Coastguard crew.

Nelson boarded the Rakanui and secured the salvage pump. The two crew members were exhausted and feeling the effects of the swell and noxious fumes from the flooded engine room. They handed over control of the tug to Nelson. Nelson singlehandedly pumped the sea water from the tug, working both above and below deck. He was able to control the ingress of water, and maintain a level that would allow the tug to make way under its own steam back to Lyttleton.

This was a long slow trip (over four hours at five knots). As the crew were exhausted, Nelson elected to remain on board and piloted the tug back to port. He also had to deal with a crew member who became ill, as well as respond to engine difficulties. Nelson also had to stop repeatedly to prime the pump and clear water from the tug. This certificate recognises Nelson's commitment and the skills he demonstrated to bring the tug Rakanui and its crew to safety.

### **Brook Rapson and Murray Phipps-Black, from Worser Bay Surf Life Saving Club**

**For their response to the stricken East by West Ferry, on 2 March 2011**

On 2 March 2011 the weather conditions in the Wellington Harbour were horrendous with torrential rain and gale force winds. During a scheduled morning sailing, the East by West Ferry was hit by a large wave that smashed the front windows. As the ferry started to fill with water the skipper sent out a mayday call. All the passengers and crew were issued lifejackets and ordered to the top deck.

Within minutes, Brook Rapson and Murray Phipps-Black launched the Worser Bay inflatable rescue boat, and headed to the ferry which was 100 metres offshore and drifting towards rocks. They were the first responding craft on scene. Brook and Murray assumed control of the situation until Police and Coastguard arrived on scene.

Brook and Murray completed six trips from the ferry to shore, transporting an estimated 30 people to safety. The rescued people were met by police and taken into the Worser Bay Surf Life Saving Club clubrooms. Once all the passengers were ashore, Brook and Murray headed back out to the ferry to lend assistance and help manoeuvre it into the middle of Worser Bay, away from the danger of hitting rocks. This certificate recognises the initiative and skills displayed by Brook and Murray in responding to a serious situation where many lives were at risk.

### **Wayne Keen from LandSAR South Canterbury**

#### **For his persistent efforts in concluding two unresolved search operations**

Through Wayne's determined efforts, two bodies have been located months after the official searches were suspended.

1. In June 2007 Corey Foster went missing while hunting in the Avoca Valley in Arthur's Pass National Park. Wayne was involved in the original search as a field team member. He returned to the search area in his own time and at his own cost. He made four expeditions to the area, at one point locating a boot belonging to Mr Foster. Eventually he narrowed the likely location to a small but inaccessible area, and passed this information onto Police. They tasked a helicopter and recovered his body on 29 March 2008.

2. In June 2011 Alan Hill was reported missing in the Ashley Gorge area of North Canterbury. An extensive search failed to locate Mr Hill. Wayne took part in the original search as a field member, and was again determined to locate the lost person. He made two trips into the area in his own time and at his own cost. On Christmas Day 2011 he located the remains of Mr Hill and reported this to Police. This enabled his body to be recovered.

This certificate recognises Wayne's efforts, which have provided comfort to Corey's and Alan's families. The fact that he was in the bush on Christmas Day 2011 illustrates his determination and commitment.

### **Shane Beech, from Coastguard Maketu**

#### **For his efforts in rescuing two surfers in the Kaituna Cut, on 23 January 2011**

On 23 January 2011 two young men decided to go river surfing down the Kaituna River, to the Kaituna Cut area. This was badly flooded due to rough weather in the area. Both men were quickly overwhelmed by huge pressure waves caused by an outgoing river and an incoming tide. They were also in danger from debris in the water caused by the flood conditions.

Shane arrived on the scene, and his immediate assessment was that the Coastguard rescue vessel would not be able to cross the bar in the current conditions. He elected to use the new Rescue Personal Water Craft during his rescue attempt.

Shane first reached the surfer that was further out to sea, and was shocked to see him without a wetsuit, and already suffering the effects of hypothermia. The sea had broken off the leg straps on the surfer's board. After pulling him aboard, Shane found the second surfer closer to shore. He too was suffering from hypothermia and was being bashed by the waves. Shane brought the two men to shore, where medics took over to keep them alive, and transfer them to hospital.

This certificate recognises that Shane's bravery and actions saved the lives of two young men in an extraordinary rescue effort; due to the fact that the river, sea, and weather conditions were regarded as "worse than extreme".