

UC Rescue

A pictorial history of the University of Canterbury Civil Defence Rescue Team

1975—2013

By Graeme Bull and Steve Glassey. Edited by Penelope Goode.



The history

An extreme weather event – a powerful north-west wind on the morning of 1 August 1975 –causing considerable tree damage on campus and associated risks to personnel prompted David Johns (Assistant Registrar for Buildings and Telecommunications) to form the University of Canterbury Rescue Team. Wayne Rissman (Christchurch City Council) initiated Civil Defence training at Queen Elizabeth II (QE2) Park in November 1975 and it was via the Civil Defence Training School that the first UC Team, and many subsequent members, were trained.

The first Team Leader was Robin Harrington (Computer Centre) and among those who answered the call for members was Graeme Bull (Biology Department), who joined the Team in late 1977. When Robin stepped down as Team Leader in 1979, Graeme was offered the role by David Johns.

Under David's management, training combined scenario exercises with Civil Defence Training School sessions. This was before the application of Unit Standards! For many years the Team participated successfully in the Cliff Dale competitions, capturing many prizes and top rankings in these varied exercises. The Team was classified as a Business House Team with primary responsibility for the University campus, with an eventual emphasis on High-Angle rescue operations.

David's retirement effectively signalled the end of support for the Team from central management, despite the best efforts of a succession of University Safety Officers, including Paul Perry and Graham Hodgeson, to revive management commitment. In spite of this, Graeme continued to maintain a training programme, albeit at times understandably irregular given the level of resourcing.

More recently

In 2006 Chris Hawker (Facilities and Operational Services Group Manager) and Jacqui Lyttle (Policy and Risk Manager) assumed responsibility for the University's emergency management portfolio, which included management of the Rescue Team. Their management provided the Team with a new direction and the budgetary support to enable eleven members to certify to USAR Category 1R (Orange Card) level.

The Team experienced real deployment in response to the 2010 and 2011 Christchurch earthquakes, most notably in response to the latter, where the Team was first deployed in the residential eastern suburbs to perform welfare checks and then moved into the Central Business District (Red Zone) to work with the international team from Taiwan for eight days. For some of the Red Zone operation, the team also worked in conjunction with Massey University (Steve Glassey who was Associate Director at the Massey University Joint Centre for Disaster Research) and Victoria University of Wellington Rescue (NZRT-7).

The future

A new Team and structure was established in September 2013 operating under the guidance and management of Steve Glassey. Closely allied to the new Centre for Risk, Resilience & Renewal (UCR3), the two units provide the university with a very capable structure for disaster training and operational response.

With the support of Michael Oliver (Acting Campus Services Manager) the Team has been re-equipped to meet new guidelines for response team registration as set by the Director of Civil Defence. The Team has signed on to industry training agreements to work towards national qualifications in emergency response and has access to technical rescue certification through Rescue 3 International. The Team now incorporates a strong student contingent, at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and will seek formal registration as a CDEM Response Team in order to become a recognised national rescue resource. UC Rescue will continue to respond to on campus emergencies and will also provide assistance to Campus Security in the foreseeable future.











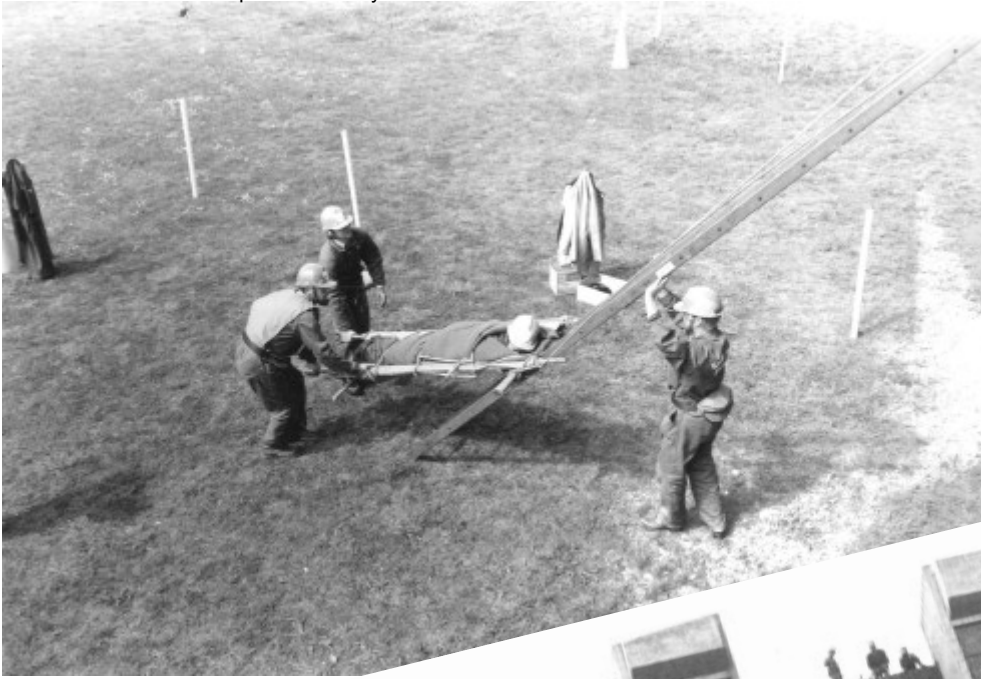










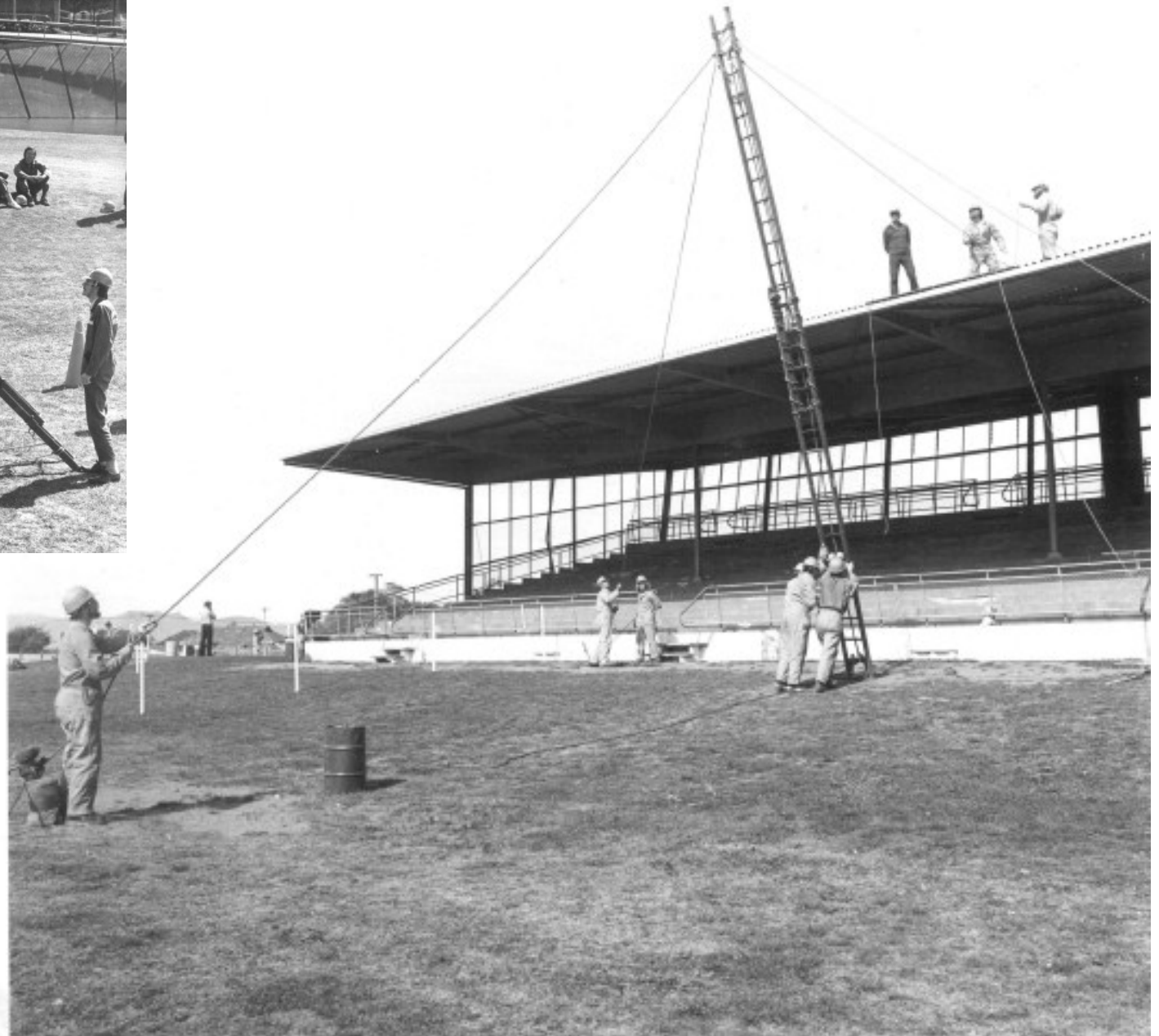




























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Dedicated to all the staff and students who have contributed to and supported UC Rescue over the years.

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