

Who goes there?



PICTURE: Toni Graham

Former Reeftonite lance corporal Lex Whyte leads lance corporal Jovan Petero, left, and sergeant Paul Byrne during a SAR training exercise in Greymouth today.

Greymouth and Reefton residents may be startled to see soldiers searching the surrounding bush over the next few days but they need not worry — it is only a search and rescue training exercise.

The six-day exercise started in Greymouth yesterday and is expected to finish in Reefton on Sunday. Nineteen Burnham-based soldiers from the 2nd first Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment are taking part.

Ross Gordon, of the Search and Rescue Institute New Zealand, said the training was a partnership with the Tai Poutini Polytechnic.

The polytechnic holds about 100 training courses throughout the country each year. Courses vary from one day to full week-long courses that could include management or tracking exercises, through to week-long rescue operations.

Mr Gordon said the New Zealand Defence Force was part of the SAR structure and this type of training kept it up to date with current practices if it was needed to help with local search and rescue operations.

The West Coast training this week will focus on wilderness-based searching and is set to include a number of scenarios, including night searches.