



Mountain Rescue Ireland

# Annual Report 2016

[mountainrescue.ie](http://mountainrescue.ie)

Rescue 116 assisting the  
Mourne M.R.T on a callout





## An Garda Síochána

We are very fortunate to have such wonderful and beautiful locations throughout Ireland where people can enjoy nature and engage in hill walking, trekking and mountaineering. However, experience has shown us that those same vistas can also become hazardous and dangerous, and with more and more people taking to the outdoors for recreation, it is inevitable that accidents and medical emergencies will happen.

When an incident does occur in a mountainous region or in a location with challenging or difficult terrain, the response capabilities of the regular emergency services can be exceeded. The Mountain Rescue Teams, which are in existence across Ireland under the umbrella of Mountain Rescue Ireland, provide an invaluable resource to our country. The dedication and commitment of these volunteers is remarkable. The high standards of training undergone by the members of the various teams is demonstrated through the difficult and often dangerous taskings undertaken by them. Mountain rescue teams can be relied upon to bring the highest standards of commitment and integrity to bear in what are often very difficult situations.

Furthermore, it provides no small measure of comfort to the emergency services and the community as a whole to know that mountain rescue teams have the skill and expertise to assist in a multitude of crisis situations, including search and rescue, recovery, medical evacuation and missing person searches.

I wish Mountain Rescue Ireland and the various mountain rescue, cliff rescue and search dog teams affiliated to it, continued success in 2017.

**Michael A Finn**  
Assistant Commissioner



## Police Service of Northern Ireland

Dear Partners in Search and Rescue,

As you are aware, significant differences were made to our delivery model for search and rescue in 2016 and we stepped back from front end delivery to our rightful place of coordination. In doing so, we reemphasised the key role you play in keeping people safe.

Despite now being involved in Search and Rescue from a P.S.N.I Policy lead perspective for 2 ½ years, I still continue to be amazed at the willing cooperation you show to help people who find themselves in acute danger and distress. You do this in your own time and you do it in all sorts of weathers and circumstances.

Within both P.S.N.I and the Northern Ireland Policing Board our model is recognised and acknowledged as a great example of collaboration at the front end of service delivery. I thank you for your efforts, your time, your patience and your expertise throughout 2016 and look forward to building on that in 2017.

**Patricia Foy**  
T/Superintendent

[mountainrescue.ie](http://mountainrescue.ie)



## A big thank you to Mountain Rescue Ireland

### Mountaineering Ireland's Perspective

Enjoying the adventure and thrill of being in the mountains is at the core of our membership. The benefits to our health & wellbeing, through physical & mental challenge and interaction & connection with nature, are well evidenced, as are the inherent risks associated with journeying into remote and wild areas.

The Mountain Rescue Teams provide an essential yet voluntary service to many, including those who encounter difficulties whilst in the pursuit of adventure. Alongside attending rescues, team members engage in skills training and rescue practice, to enable them to operate efficiently and safely as a team during call outs, which are typically in the worst of conditions and at night time. Team members volunteer more of their time to fundraise for provision of this service. Mountaineering Ireland would like to ask that all participants join them in donating to this essential service.

To become responsible participants, we must make ourselves aware of the inherent risk in all things we choose to do. By preparing and educating ourselves, we increase our enjoyment of the activity and are in a position to make better decisions to help manage, minimise or avoid hazards and thus keep ourselves safer whilst we have fun in the mountains. By taking on this personal responsibility, we reduce the likelihood of needing to be rescued.

Jane Carney Training Officer  
[Jane@mountaineering.ie](mailto:Jane@mountaineering.ie)  
[www.mountaineering.ie](http://www.mountaineering.ie)







Any individual or group requiring assistance in the upland and mountainous environs on the island of Ireland will be responded to by volunteers embedded in the local community.

These volunteers are organised into mountain rescue teams and tasked by the police force, A.G.S. within the Irish republic and P.S.N.I. within Northern Ireland.

This tasking leads to an emergency response which will search, locate and rescue those seeking assistance and escort them to safety or deliver them to more definitive medical care.

Collectively these teams come together as Mountain Rescue Ireland (M.R.I.) to represent the views of its members on mountain rescue and safety, and to represent and liaise on general matters with government and to propagate information on mountain rescue and

safety and take such action as may be necessary to promote a wider appreciation of the need for mountain safety.

M.R.I. is a member of the International Commission of Alpine Rescue (I.C.A.R.) the international body for mountain rescue organisations dedicated to the advancement of best practice in mountain rescue worldwide.



This report reflects back on 2016 and presents the commitment and work of the teams dedicated to responding to those in need.

## M.R.I. consists of the following teams:

Donegal MRT

North West MRT

Sligo/Leitrim MRT

Mourne MRT

Mayo MRT

Galway MRT

Dublin/Wicklow MRT

SARDA (Ireland)

Glen of Imaal MRT

Kerry MRT

South Eastern MRA

Tramore & Cliff MRT

# M.R.I. Chairman's Report

2016 saw a year where mountain rescue teams answered every request for assistance, a commitment delivered by every mountain rescue volunteer. This service ranged from finding the lost and returning them, rescuing the injured and solemnly recovering the remains arising out of tragic accidents. These twelve teams come together under the banner of M.R.I. to represent the mountain rescue community to stakeholders at both a national and international level and it is important to thank all those who have dedicated themselves to maintaining M.R.I. over 2016. I would like to recognise the retiring officers and their service: Kenny Roberts, Dave Goddard and Margaret Smith for keeping the lights on and navigating M.R.I. through the complex terrain of maintaining a 24/7/365 emergency response service in an entirely volunteer capacity. It is also important to recognise the efforts of the current officers, Joe Pond and Ray Bradfield in providing a seamless transition of officeholders over this past year.

## In reflecting on 2016, it would be important to highlight the following achievements:

Insurance cover is the most important provision M.R.I. offers the teams, as it is the foundation on which all volunteer activity occurs within mountain rescue. This funding was delivered in the past through S.S.N.O. grants through the POBAL schemes but after a strategic redirection of POBAL we were left with a drift between the goals of both organisations. Thankfully, the scenario where no insurance funding was available to M.R.I. was recognised and the responsibility for this changed government departments with the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs taking over delivering on this commitment. Special recognition is due to Minister Michael Ring for his commitment shown to mountain rescue through the years. Special thanks to M.R.I. Secretary Ray Bradfield for the heavy lifting on this matter.

In terms of complying with best practice with corporate governance, M.R.I. has undertaken the steps towards incorporation as a company limited by guarantee (C.L.G.) in recognition of its status as a Type C organisation under

the governance code. The navigation on this journey has been provided by Dechert LLP, with special thanks to Declan O'Sullivan and his support team in the Dublin office.

ICAR is the international body representing all mountain rescue organisations and M.R.I. was able to send four delegates to the annual congress in Bulgaria in October. These delegates immersed themselves in the workshops, presentations and discussions representing developments in international best practice in terms of search methodologies, medical developments, rescue techniques and equipment and technology innovations. The commitment shown by the delegates in giving of their time in travelling, attending and interacting over the congress and delivering a report on the congress to the teams is a demonstration of the commitment of M.R.I. in staying abreast of all developments within the international mountain rescue community.

Mayo M.R.T. received a visit at Rescue Base at Croagh Patrick on the morning of Reek Sunday by the Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs and Natural Resources, Mr Sean Kyne to witness the preparation, co-ordination and delivery of a mountain rescue response to the needs of pilgrims on the annual pilgrimage to the summit. This response was delivered by every mountain rescue team within M.R.I. with extra support being provided by Calder Valley M.R.T. from the U.K.

Mountain rescue and the need for support were also discussed in the Dail and Joint Oireachtas Committee this year, where expressions of support will receive active engagement from us in 2017.

Finally and most importantly, M.R.I. would like to offer its deepest sympathies to the family, friends and fellow volunteers of Catriona Lucas, who died in the line of duty on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2016. Catriona is remembered by her S.A.R.D.A comrades further on in this report.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam

**Alan Carr**  
chairman@mountainrescue.ie

# M.R.I. Secretary's Report

It was my privilege to accept the position of M.R.I. Secretary at the end of May 2016 and I wish to thank my predecessor, Dave Goddard, my fellow elected officers, Alan Carr and Joe Pond, as well as my own team, S.E.M.R.A., for their help and support as I settled in. Mostly, the job entails keeping information flowing between the various MRI Officers, the teams and other stakeholders. M.R.I. holds a number of insurance policies on behalf of the twelve teams affiliated to MRI and that

represents a significant responsibility and administrative burden. Helping to keep M.R.I. on the good side of funding agencies and regulators is the other ongoing task, made easier by the selfless dedication of our volunteers at the pointy end of Mountain Rescue for whom there is an unending supply of goodwill.

**Ray Bradfield**  
secretary@mountainrescue.ie

# 2016 FINANCIAL REPORT

## Income 2016

• Annual grant	€69,750
• Insurance grant	€66,245
• Team subscription	€7,863
• Donations	€8,479
• Sundry and training	€5,320

Total income for 2016

€157,657

## Expenditure 2016

• Training and accreditation	€9,302
• Insurance	€71,760
• National conference and AGM	€3,636
• Telephone	€896
• Printing and office costs	€2,978
• Website costs	€2,450
• Mountain rescue & communications equipment	€51,163
• Travel and subsistence	€2,614
• Auditors' remuneration	€1,574
• Bank charges	€405
• Profit/loss on exchange	€645
• General expenses	€556
• Subscriptions and memberships	€1,255
• Depreciation	€63,292

Total expenditure for 2016

€212,526

(€54,869)

Amortisation of government grants

€40,000

Surplus/(deficit) for the year

(€14,859)



Insurance Grant

Annual Grant



Rescue & communications equipment

Insurance

# 2016 STATISTICS REPORT

Statistics are becoming a more important subject for mountain rescue. In an era of accountability when every cent is counted there is a need for reliable statistics to show the value of what we do and to argue for appropriate funding.

We have also been requested by An Garda Síochána and the P.S.N.I. to provide yearly statistics. To this end we are trying to come up with a stats collection system that will give consistent reliable data across all teams.

This will take time but will hopefully give a system that will last for many years. Thanks should be given to Dr. Bob Sharp, a veteran Scottish Mountain Rescue volunteer for his help with this so far.

2016 was a busy year again for the 384 volunteers that make up the mountain rescue teams in Ireland. The 12 teams had a total of 405 callouts as a result of over 300 separate incidents in the mountains. More than half of these incidents required helicopter assistance.

Time is the most important resource given by team members to their teams. In this year's statistics we have tried to quantify that time.

The main MR visibility to the public is in the mountains on a callout but this is only a fraction of the time spent on MR-related activities. A huge amount of time is needed on an ongoing basis to ensure that, when a callout happens, it will run smoothly and have a successful outcome.

In the past a training schedule was decided by each team. Now, more and more, much of the training is dictated to

by the need for certification and recertification of skills to comply with official requirements. This certainly improves the quality of the service provided but at the same time increases hugely the input needed by the volunteer team members.

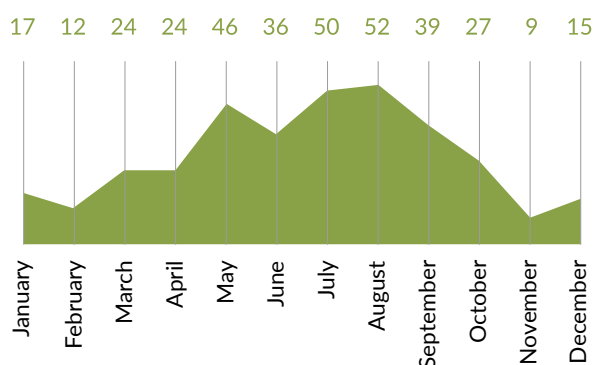
So as well as regular training in the bread and butter skills of stretcher carrying, navigation, searching, steep ground, basic first aid, swiftwater, and rope work there is also a need for more specialist training in many of these areas. On top of that there is travel time to callouts and training, the finances of the team must be kept in order and accounts prepared, team equipment maintained and replaced when necessary, team vehicles taxed, insured, maintained and replaced and team bases maintained and paid for. Team members also make up the national organisation, M.R.I., and attend national meetings and training courses such as party leader or technical rescue skills courses.

One of the most important activities for any team is fundraising and this adds a considerable amount of time, whether it's a straightforward bucket-shake or a major fundraising event.

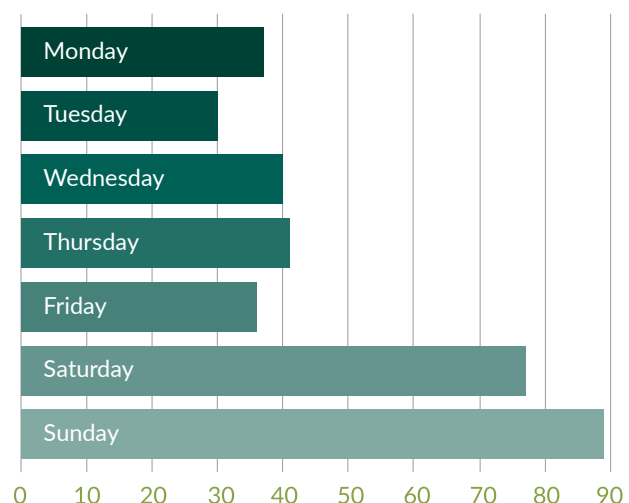
This year all teams were asked to estimate the total number of hours required to run their teams. The total figure for all teams is 59,243 person-hours. This is probably a conservative estimate.

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## Frequency of incident per month of the year



## Frequency of incident per day of the week



# North West Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: David Campbell  
Team Leader: Joe Dowdall  
Website: [www.nwmrt.org](http://www.nwmrt.org)



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CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2016

In common with other years and indeed other MR teams on the island of Ireland or in the rest of the UK, 2016 could be said to have been a very busy, active year for the North West Mountain Rescue Team.

The statistics speak for themselves - 27 incidents... approx. one a fortnight, which took over 90 hours to resolve, 107 exercises lasting nearly 1000 hours and 121 PR, demo and fundraising events which took up almost 800 hours. In total, doing the work for which we exist, took nearly 2000 hours which was given freely by our 64 active members and if you add up all of their individual commitment hours, our volunteers collectively gave nearly 13½ thousand hours to the work of the team.

Their commitment to this life-saving work can only be achieved by the work being put in to training, preparation and inevitably fundraising, which has now become (perhaps unfortunately) an even greater and necessary part of the focus of voluntary emergency teams everywhere. Nearly 300 hours were devoted to this area alone, on top of the vital training in workshop and simulated call-out scenarios which included (to nearest 50 hrs)... medical (nearly 900 hours), search (350 hrs), rope, equipment and technical work (2500 hrs), navigation (500 hrs), communications (750 hrs), helicopter (100 hrs) and increasingly diverse skills that are being required of the teams....winter and water safety (1000 hrs).

North West Mountain Rescue Team covers nearly 5,000 square miles (12,600 Sq.Kms) of Northern Ireland in three sections, West, Central and East, based in Enniskillen., Co. Fermanagh, Magherafelt, Co. Derry and Broughshane, Co. Antrim respectively.

Each section has around 20 volunteers of all ages and gender. When a call-out comes in, the nearest section will be the first to respond, then will request other sections and team members to help if and when needed. All team

members are also available to assist our colleagues in Mourne Mountain Rescue Team, plus all the other teams on the island of Ireland or even, if necessary, teams in Scotland, England and Wales.

2016 saw both a continuation and an increase in liaisons with other teams and rescue agencies both statutory and volunteer, throughout the UK and Ireland, assisting in operations and conducting joint exercises with e.g. Galloway M.R.T., Carrybridge R.N.L.I., Irish and HM Coastguard and Antrim area NI Fire and Rescue Service. There was also a significant liaison with many, very diverse community groups and organisations, to help raise both awareness of our work and much needed funds, from Ballymena Runners, South West Area Hospital, Omagh Venture Scouts, Mid-Ulster Walking Group and the Presbyterian Womens' Group!

2016 also saw significant Press, Radio and TV and social media coverage of several of the operations in which we were involved and gave great coverage to our major fundraising and community events on the Belfast Hills Walk in May and the Broughshane Run in August, both of which were organised by N.W.M.R.T. and raised significant funding. These will now be annual events.

At the end of 2016 the Government of Northern Ireland announced substantial extra funding for Search and Rescue groups in Northern Ireland and the North West Mountain Rescue Team is expected to receive a proportion of that to purchase three vehicles...essential for the work we do....in 2017.

Finally...thanks go out to all the people outside of the team who have helped to raise funds...have donated monies....given time in instruction and help...or simply just moral support, particularly the partners and families of volunteer team members. The team could not exist without their understanding and support.





Team Chair: Dave Goddard  
Team Coordinators: Neville Watson, Ian McCracken,  
Andrew McKee, Martin McMullan  
Website: [www.mournemrt.org](http://www.mournemrt.org)

# Mourne Mountain Rescue Team

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CALLOUTS



In 2016 the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team experienced another incident filled year with forty four requests for assistance - up from thirty five in 2015.

Twenty eight active full team members and five trainee members clocked up 1431 man hours during the forty four callouts, not taking into consideration team training (twice per month), committee meetings, external meetings, fundraising talks and any additional external training which members commit to throughout the year. Saturday and Sunday were the busiest days of the week for callouts with August the busiest month totalling ten incidents. On four occasions help was requested from Rescue116 / P.S.N.I. Air support.

In addition to internal team training the team committed to sending members on the following courses during 2016: M.R.I. Rigging for Rescue, Scottish Winter Training, WEMSI EMT, WEMSI Physician, Joint Training with Galloway MRT, ongoing training with Rescue 116 and familiarisation training with local N.I.A.S. and Coastguard crews.

The Mourne M.R.T.'s primary area of response is the Mourne Mountains with the team also responsible for the Slieve Croob, Slieve Gullion and Cooley Mountain regions. The Mourne M.R.T. will assist any other M.R.I. team in their area of operation if requested.

The Mourne M.R.T. would like to thank the external agencies we have worked with during 2016 for another successful year of collaborative partnership, training and inter-agency cooperation. Our thanks are extended to the Police Service of Northern Ireland, Irish Coastguard, UK Maritime & Coastguard Agency, Rescue116, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, N.I.A.S. Hazardous Area Response Team, P.S.N.I. Air Support Unit, S.A.R.D.A. Ireland North and Newcastle R.N.L.I.

We also extend a huge thanks to the various individuals, walking clubs, businesses and supporters who raise vital funds for the team throughout the year. Our team could not operate without your ongoing financial support. A special mention to Nat Pierson who has selflessly (along with his parents) raised a staggering £12,000 for the team after his mother was helped by the team during a callout several years ago. Thank you Nat...You are our hero!

As 2016 drew to a close the Northern Ireland Government announced that additional funding was being made available for Search & Rescue Teams in the province. The Mourne M.R.T. is expecting to receive some of this funding in order to replace our aging communications vehicle and to purchase and equip a suitable personnel transporter.

Annual Report 2016



# Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue

Team Chair: Edmund Fagan  
Team Leader: Mark Flynn  
Website: [www.dwmrt.ie](http://www.dwmrt.ie)



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CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2016

The Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team (DWMRT) is comprised of more than 40 rescue team members and the same number again of probationary, associate and honorary members. Our volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds, professions and places.

One of the things we all have in common is our love of spending time in the hills and another is a desire to help others when needed. D.W.M.R.T. work hand in hand with Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team during callouts and each year we arrange joint training exercises.

All mountain rescue teams in Ireland know that fundraising is a permanent and ongoing challenge. D.W.M.R.T. has three main fundraising events which are all hill based and provide significant training opportunities. The Art O'Neill Challenge takes place on a

midnight in January when a maximum of 200 participants take on a 54km route from Dublin Castle to Glenmalure, deep in the Wicklow Mountains. In March we host Walk the Line on sustainable trails in the Dublin Mountains. Then in November we have Run the Line, an accessible hill-running event which has become very popular with seasoned hill-runners and novice road-runners alike. We are very lucky to benefit from the support of associate members, friends and the community to help us run these events to a high standard.

In 2016 we continued our explorations of new technology when we arranged our first training session with drones. The technology has great potential to assist in searching large areas and deploying boots on the ground more efficiently.

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Team Chair: Paul Ashmore  
Team Leader: Derry Cullen  
Website: [www.wmr.ie](http://www.wmr.ie)

# Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue

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CALLOUTS



2016 continued to be a busy year for The Glen Team.

Training during the year consisted of a joint training day with Dublin/Wicklow MR at Kilruddery Estate. We also began training with our SwiftWater Technician Panel. We have also had An Garda Síochána assist us with a talk on crime scene awareness. The training calendar for 2017 has already been drawn up.

The team's main fundraiser, The Moonlight Challenge, continues to be a success and will continue in 2017. We also adopted a constitution for FOG (Friends of the Glen) so FOG members can come on board and help in fundraising.

2017 will see the DTL training programme begin in the coming weeks.

The team continues to have an excellent relationship with external agencies (An Garda Síochána, N.P.W.S., Wicklow Co Co, PDF, Air Corps, Coast Guard) and will continue to work closely with all in the future.

2016 also saw the opening of our second base at the old Donard Garda station which gives a dedicated permanent base for callouts in the West Wicklow area.

Glendalough continues to be our busiest area for callouts and will continue to be in the future.

Annual Report 2016



# South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association

Team Chair: Roy Johnston  
Team Leader: Pat Holland  
Website: [www.semra.ie](http://www.semra.ie)



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CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2016

SEMRA is responsible for conducting searches and rescues in the mountains of the South East of Ireland. The area includes but is not limited to the Comeraghs, Galtees, Knockmealdowns, Slievenamon and Blackstairs. The team responds to an average of twenty five callouts per annum. The team comprises approximately forty five members. The team is based in the major population centres of the South East of Ireland, including Carlow, Clonmel, Dungarvan, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Waterford. The team has a base in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary which is central to the geographical response area.

In 2016, S.E.M.R.A. responded to a total of 18 incidents. This included a total of three searches, twelve rescues, two false alarms and one recovery of an animal. This is a reduction from twenty eight incidents in 2015. Geographic locations and types of injuries were as per those encountered in previous years.

In addition S.E.M.R.A. members made their annual journey to Croagh Patrick to assist Mayo M.R.T. on Reek Sunday.

The following training was conducted by S.E.M.R.A. in 2016:

- 9 trainees completed the BMRCs programme in 2016.
- 10 full team practices took place. Additional specific training was held throughout the year with specialist groups including the Command Group, Heights Group, Casualty Care Group and 4x4 off road driver training.
- The Air Accident Investigation Unit (AAIU) made a presentation at our two-day team training weekend.
- Helicopter training was conducted on 3 occasions with R117 at the Coast Guard base in Waterford.

### External achievements

- 8 external courses were attended by SEMRA members including RNLI Communications Course, MRI Party Leader, Wilderness EMT course, REC2, REC4, certified

off-road 4x4 training, certified PPE Equipment Inspection & Maintenance (Sligo Leitrim MRT) and certified rigging course in Doolin.

### Peer review

- Recommendations from the SEMRA team assessment were incorporated into training exercises in 2016 including radio communications and use of Tetra radios, Equipment Officer training and heights training.

The team's VW Rockton was equipped for operational use in a manner in which it can support a mountain rescue incident. The following equipment and personal gear were procured in 2016: A new Bell stretcher, vacuum mattress, Mountain Equipment jackets for existing and new members.

- As of year ending Dec 2016, S.E.M.R.A. had a total of 9 trainee members and 39 full team members.
- In 2016, S.E.M.R.A. members served a total of 620 hours while participating in callouts.
- Three members retired from S.E.M.R.A. in 2016. Acknowledgment letters have been issued to each former member to thank them for their service and commitment to the team.

S.E.M.R.A. would also like to thank local hill walking clubs and members of the public for their support in 2016.

2016 was the third year of running a S.E.M.R.A. fundraising event called The Long Way Round. This comprised of a 15 km night walk/ run from the S.E.M.R.A. base on road, track and mountain in the surrounding countryside. The event is increasing in popularity each year and helps to raise vital funds to sustain the team.

Identification of desirables/needs for the immediate future: A tetra aerial will be installed in the S.E.M.R.A. base to enable it to become an operational facility.





Team Chair: Paul Hennessy  
Team Leader: Paul Hennessy  
Website: [www.cliffrescue.ie](http://www.cliffrescue.ie)

# Tramore Cliff and Mountain Rescue Association

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STANDBY



Tramore Cliff and Mountain rescue founded in 1978 is heading into its 40th year of operation's, a founding member along with Kerry and Mourne Mountain Rescue Teams of I.M.R.A. which has now become Mountain Rescue Ireland (M.R.I.). The Tramore team had a very exciting and eventful 2016 and a new team leader, Paul Hennessy, was appointed. Paul joined the organisation in 1985 so has many years of experience rescuing casualties out of the surrounding mountains and cliffs in the Tramore and Waterford area.

2016 was an exciting one in the area of Tramore as there was a number of events commemorating the 200th anniversary of the tragedy of the Sea Horse transport ship in 1816, total number on board the Sea Horse was 394 men, women and children, of whom just 30 – all men, including the ship's master Captain Gibbs and two seamen – survived. A stark reminder of the dangers of the sea and cliffs.

The Tramore team continued to work and train in the mountains with S.E.M.R.A. in the early part of the year and also with the Coastguard, Helicopter and R.N.L.I., its peer review in June was very positive for the team, but as always items to work on, comments such as: 'Rescue base: A masterpiece of miniaturisation. Well organised, compact, well located with other agencies. Training stats and operations stats available, training continued throughout the year both in the mountains and on the cliffs.

New ropes, ID's, navigational equipment was purchased throughout the year, with a lot of new equipment for the mountains. Technical mountain training was emphasised as well as standard navigational, search and rescue techniques as well as First Aid and night time rescue scenarios with a particular emphasis on the mountains of Waterford- with additional skills including radio communications, operations management, wilderness

casualty care, off-road driving and helicopter landing site management.

Fundraising continued throughout the year with a special rescue video done in collaboration with Tesco. We had a number of new recruits in 2016, who have been under training and are ready to go in our ever-growing team. We are very much looking forward to 2017 and are fully operational, in fact we are shortlisted as a finalist for the emergency response team award in the Local Authority Management Award's ceremony in Dublin in February the only mountain rescue team making it as a finalist. Exciting stuff indeed!



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# Kerry Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Jimmy Laide  
Team Leader: Tim Murphy  
Website: [www.kerrymountainrescue.ie](http://www.kerrymountainrescue.ie)



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CALLOUTS

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41	Responses to calls for assistance
40	People assisted
2	Fatalities in the mountains
1771	Rescue hours
1390	Team training hours
35	Volunteer members

2016 has been busy for Kerry Mountain Rescue Team. The Team has dealt with some very serious incidents this year. These include 2 fatalities and a number of serious spinal injuries. Poor weather conditions have been a feature in a number these call outs.



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Team Chair: Henry Smith  
Team Leader: Gerry Tobin  
Website: [www.sardaireland.com](http://www.sardaireland.com)

# Search and Rescue Dog Association

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CALLOUTS



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2016 was a challenging year for S.A.R.D.A. Ireland especially with the sad loss of our dear friend and former member Caitriona Lucas.

We also fondly remember search dog Lilly who passed away after many years of service with her handler Catherine Kelly. 2016 also marked a break for two of our long time bodies and committee members Ben Bryan and Mags Smyth who have both embarked on new journeys in volunteering.

We are ever grateful for everyone who makes it possible for us to do what we do...our families who not only make it possible for us to travel the country (and internationally) to attend trainings, meetings and conferences, but also on occasion are woken by late night phone calls to see their loved ones head off into the night to respond to a callout. Our friends, who we canvas, cajole and often bribe (with coffee & treats) to body in all kinds of uncomfortable weather conditions.

The farmers who let us use their land and work around their stock, particularly Sean Nolan in Wicklow. Our employers who accommodate our short notice call-outs. Our donors who make it possible for us to source the equipment to operate in the harshest of conditions Ireland and its hills can throw at us. And all of our friends and colleagues throughout the entire voluntary emergency services, especially the teams that make up MRI and the Irish Coast Guard.

As with most years we attended searches both day and night, through wind rain and even some sunshine. There were no notable seasonal variations to the numbers of callouts. We also deployed two dogs to several searches this year in an effort to expedite area coverage when possible which was received positively by not only search managers but also by our own team members who felt they benefited from working concurrently, particularly in

terms of morale and having another dog team to consult with on site.

We had a positive year of training with increased attendances on 2015 and also hosting and working with three International handlers and trainers to share knowledge, we hope to do more of this in the coming year and travel as a team to train overseas. The year ended on a high with eight pups passing obedience and stock tests to become S.A.R.D.A. Trainees and secure their green tags.

Several new perspective members attended our National Training weekends throughout the year and we will welcome four new members in our upcoming AGM.

There is no doubt that S.A.R.D.A. Ireland's profile has taken a big step forward over the year. Sadly it must be noted that much of this is due to Bernard Lucas's interviews following Caitriona's passing. It was also helped by a short documentary produced and shared in Autumn and being featured on RTE Six One News twice throughout the year. Huge credit to Sheelagh O'Malley Hughes our P.R.O. for her Trojan work on all fronts.

Looking forward to a successful 2017 focusing on further development of our profile and also focusing on increasing awareness of our assessment and qualification standards among tasking bodies and search managers.



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# Galway Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Dermot Hughes  
Team Leader: Rory Sherlock  
Website: [www.gmrt.ie](http://www.gmrt.ie)



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CALLOUTS

## Annual Report 2016

Galway Mountain Rescue Team had a busy year in 2016 and there was a considerable focus on search training. GMRT hosted visits from the Centre for Search Research in the UK on two occasions during the year and they delivered a Field Search Skills course in March and a Search Management course in June. The Search Management course was also attended by members of other mountain rescue teams, other voluntary services and An Garda Síochána. GMRT members also attended the MRI Rigging for Rescue training course in Doolin and a swift water rescue course was also organised, a new venture for Galway MRT.

Galway M.R.T. had 13 callouts in 2016 and these included a search for a local walker who had become separated from his walking group, the rescue of a Scottish female who was cragfast on Derryclare and a stand-by for

two climbers overdue on Carrot Ridge. Injured persons assisted included a French visitor with a lower leg injury in the Maamturks, an Austrian visitor with a broken arm on Leenane Hill, a woman with an injured knee on Diamond Hill and a hypothermic juvenile at Mám Éan. The most encouraging aspect of our activities in 2016 was the great efforts made by our trainees – there is general agreement that they are the best trainee group we've seen in years and their presence will strengthen the team for years to come. Five of the group became full members of Galway M.R.T. in December and we expect others to follow in their footsteps shortly – well done to all of them for their input to training, call-outs and other events over the year.

The appointment of five new members of Galway MRT in December brought our operational numbers to 32 who, together with our valuable non-operational members, logged over 3,770 person-hours of effort in support of their team. Galway M.R.T. would like to thank all the members of the association for their efforts throughout the year and also to acknowledge the contribution made by our families, friends and employers in support of our efforts. For the coming year, we will continue to work towards the acquisition of a suitable base premises for Galway M.R.T., as we see this as being instrumental to our development.







Team Chair: Colm Byrne  
Team Leader: Jerome Hopkins  
Website: [www.mayomrt.com](http://www.mayomrt.com)

# Mayo Mountain Rescue Team

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2016 was a very busy year for the Mayo Mountain Rescue Team. In 2016 the team responded to fifty two requests for assistance with July and August being the busiest months for the team. In comparison to 2015, there was a 37% increase in the number of callouts making it one of the busiest in the team's history. Of these callouts, 90% were on Croagh Patrick with the remaining split between Mweelrea and the Nephin Begs. The most common injuries recorded were lower leg injuries (47%) and head injuries. While the majority of our callouts were rescues, there were also cases of lost walkers and a recovery.

There are currently thirty six members on the Mayo team comprising of twenty eight full members and 8 probational members. In 2016, team members attended a variety of training courses including Wilderness EMT, Party Leader, Mountain Skills and Search Management. In addition, the Mayo team successfully co-ordinated and facilitated the running of a P.P.E. inspection course in Westport and the National Foundation Rigging Course in Doolin. Mayo M.R.T. also successfully completed a Peer Review in May 2016.

Successful fundraising activities in 2016 included the MMRT table quiz, local flag days and raffle. In 2017, Mayo M.R.T. will launch the new 'Moonlight in Mayo Challenge' to raise much needed funds. Without the

generosity and continued support of the local community, the effective running of the team would not be possible. One of the highlights of 2016 was the opening of our newly acquired Headquarters in Westport. Alongside the core activities of the team, team members gave an exceptional amount of extra time to oversee renovation works at our new Headquarters. Mayo M.R.T. now has a place to call home for the first time in its history!

The team acknowledges the significant contribution made by the mountain rescue teams who assisted Mayo M.R.T. operations on Reek Sunday. The team also recognizes the contribution made by longstanding members who departed the team in 2016 and, last but not least, thanks to all our families, friends, employers and the local community for their continued support.



Annual Report 2016

# Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Ciaran Davis  
Team Leader: Iain Mounsey  
Website: [www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie](http://www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie)



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## Annual Report 2016

During 2016 S.L.M.R.T. conducted four Searches, seven Rescues and over 460 person hours given. These were a mix of operating with other agencies including other M.R.Ts Garda, Irish Coastguard, R.N.L.I., H.S.E. and Fire Services.

The incidents involved searches across a variety of terrain with no real pattern of time of day, weather conditions etc. The only trend noticed this year was the callouts came in two's and three's! with a few either immediately after a callout or during!

Training this year comprised of twenty seven sessions covering the following: Doolin Rigging Course, REC, R.E.C 4, Night Navigation, PPE Inspection Course, Party Leader Course, Joint exercise with RNLI, Joint Exercises with neighbouring teams, Communications and Medical Refreshers.

The team also committed to ten different events in 2016 as part of our fundraising strategy and public relations. Our fundraising covered a pub quiz, our annual street collection and the centrepiece the Ben Bulbin Night walk with continues to be a popular event.

A number of other local events happened across the county this year, a lot of which involved large numbers of the public crossing remote areas of difficult terrain. It was decided in the interest of public safety and Team promotion, to align our training days to coincide with these events which include the An Post Cycle, Warriors Run, Sligo Way Ultra. Other events attended were the St Patricks day parades in Sligo and Leitrim, as well as the national exercise of Croagh Patrick.

During the year the team put the shoulder to the wheel for 3 major fundraising events beginning with the Pub Quiz to which we thank the Harp Tavern, Sligo for hosting us. This was then followed soon after by the now

infamous Ben Bulbin Night Walk, around 200 supporters enjoyed the guided hike to the top Ben. Finally we hit the streets of Sligo for our annual street collection. With all the fundraising carried out over the year it never ceases to amaze us as to the generosity of the people of Sligo and beyond, We would sincerely like to thank everyone who has donated to the team in terms of money, time, soup and sandwiches!

Currently we have nineteen active members of the team with a recruitment drive in progress, six potential new members will be put through their paces starting January 2017. Retiring from the team this year was Daniel Keenaghan after over 10 years of service. The team would like to thank Daniel for his dedication to the team over the years and to wish him well for the future. Over the course of 2016 team members gave up over 2600hrs of their time to commit to incidents training and fundraising.

SLMRT has three Vehicles in use, a 2008 Ford Transit Van, a 2015 VW Transporter and a 2004 Landrover Discovery. For 2017 it is envisaged that the Landrover will be retired due to funding and the vehicle age.

The team is currently housed within an area vacated by the Sligo County Council. This has provided us with a secure facility in which to keep all the vehicles and equipment and also space to conduct training. We are very grateful for the assistance provided by Sligo County Council.

We would like to thank North West M.R.T. for a loan of their stretcher whilst our went to Lyon Equipment for a refurb. Little did we know that it would be used in anger! Also a word of thanks to Lyon Equipment for the work carried out to our stretcher, a very professional job indeed! This will keep our McInness ready and waiting for years to come.





Team Chair: Brian Pat Murray  
Team Leader: Garret Wilson  
Website: [www.facebook.com/DonegalMRT](http://www.facebook.com/DonegalMRT)

# Donegal Mountain Rescue Team

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Another active year was experienced resulting in over 3,500 man hours accumulated for incidents, training, fund raising and administration. The types of incidents varied this year with a lot of activity happening on the lowlands where our assistance was required to locate missing children and vulnerable adults on and off the hills.

images to its operators and our team members, as well as to anyone who logs remotely (controlled) into the system.

The software utilized by the team allows you to plot a mapped course which the drone will automatically search. The thermal imaging capability spots people in the dark and the developers are now working on applying night vision. Who knows where the future of drone use could lead us to?. What with it's usage in the United States to have a package of a few kg delivered to your doorstep from Amazon through use of drones - then why not use the same concept to deliver mobile phones or medication to stranded casualties that may otherwise, due to terrain for example take a two hour walk in.

The end of our year as always focuses on those that transition the safe passage from probation to a fully fledged member. Focus also turns to recruitment for the following year and the annual shake up of officer roles and transition of knowledge to same.

On the horizon we hope by end of Q1 2017 to have successfully completed a fit out of a 2nd hand vehicle which we recently purchased that will be modified for use as our Mobile Incident Control Unit. It was not uncommon for one of our vehicles to end its Call Out day in a local garage.

The team mainly encountered lower limb injuries or exposure cases in the higher regions. Outside of your typical lower legs and arms injuries we also had the calls for the stranded sheep as well as other animals needing extraction from inaccessible places. The latter of course doubling up as training exercises and an opportunity to tune in the rope skills.

This year we focused considerable time in getting nine team members R.E.C 4 qualified - there are now three emergency 1st responders. There is also an Emergency Medical Technician as part of the teams collective experience. Many exercises then followed which allowed us to practise and hone our First Aid skills. We also had our two day refresher technical ropework course in the summer.

As always the administration end of things or the 80% of effort in the 80\20 ruling lead to a number of fund-raisers together with hours dedicated to maintaining our base and equipment and vehicles.

A big year also in the drone space where earlier in the year (April) tests conducted by DroneSAR, the Donegal-based developer of drone-mounted search-and-rescue mapping software, leading drone producer DJI, the rescue team and the European Emergency Number Association (EENA) recorded as much as an eightfold reduction time in locating casualties.

We carried out a number of exercises where we used drone live relay - where the drones relayed data and live



# CATRIONA LUCAS

From S.A.R.D.A Ireland - in memory of Caitríona Lucas (June 18<sup>th</sup>, 1975 - September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)



Search and Rescue Dog Association Ireland received some devastating news on the afternoon of September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016. While many of us had been shocked to hear that a coast guard crew member had lost their life during a search operation that day, it took a few more hours for that casualty's name to be released.

And when it was, our worst fears were confirmed: the person who had died was our friend and former S.A.R.D.A. colleague Caitríona Lucas.

Words cannot describe how shaken we were by the news. Many of us had worked and socialised together with Caitríona as a fellow S.A.R.D.A. dog handler; to some of us, she was also a coast guard colleague. To all of us, she was simply someone who was a truly good, kind, generous person whose sudden and tragic loss seemed inconceivable.

Caitríona joined S.A.R.D.A. in 2005, having become interested in combining search dog training with her work as a member of Doolin Coast Guard team - one of the busiest CG units in the country. She proceeded through the usual stages of helping as a 'dogsbody' (a person who goes and hides somewhere in the search area for the dogs to find) and then moving on to train her own dog, Zac. She attended S.A.R.D.A.'s training weekends in different parts of the country, often accompanied by her husband Bernard, and also trained regularly with some members of Galway Mountain Rescue Team.

All that hard work paid off, and Caitríona and Zac qualified as a search dog team during tough 3-day assessments held in Wicklow in 2008. Two years later, the pair passed successfully their re-assessment in the Comeragh Mountains. They continued to work together as qualified search dog team until Caitríona retired Zac from the search work in 2012. While on S.A.R.D.A.'s callout list, they assisted with numerous missing person searches, both with their 'home team', Doolin Coast Guard, and also with many mountain rescue teams around the country, including Galway M.R.T, Glen of Imaal M.R.T. and Dublin/Wicklow M.R.T. Caitríona's response pack was always ready in her jeep, and there were several occasions when she hit the road to Wicklow in the dead

of the night to assist in a search and returned to Clare to get back to work at her job in Ennistymon library for the following morning. Her commitment was unwavering.

During her involvement in S.A.R.D.A., Caitríona also acted as the organisation's secretary for three years between 2011 and 2014. As with everything she did, she approached the task with great dedication and energy. She organised training weekends, responded to enquiries and provided information to the general public and to prospective new S.A.R.D.A. volunteers. Most notably, she more or less single-handedly organised Mountain Rescue Ireland's 2012 AGM/conference which was held in Doolin and which many participants agreed was one the best AGMs they had ever attended!

However, Caitríona was not just very efficient: she was also incredibly kind and thoughtful. Whenever somebody from S.A.R.D.A. lost somebody belonging to them, or got married, or was going through something similarly momentous in their life, she would let other members know about the news - be it glad or sad - and that person would often receive a card in the post from her.

It is always shocking when someone so young dies so unexpectedly and under such tragic circumstances. But it is particularly heartbreaking when that person is someone whose whole life was characterised by generosity and helping others. We are well aware that we only glimpsed at it through Caitríona's work in S.A.R.D.A. Outside of that, she was a devoted wife and mother, a cherished member of her extended family, an inspirational colleague at her workplace and a highly respected member of her coast guard team. Our loss is great, but we are only one group among many, many people whose lives are emptier for this loss, yet enriched for having known her.

May she never be forgotten.



# THE HOLY MOUNTAIN TEACH NA MIASA CROAGH PATRICK

On the last Sunday of July the teams of M.R.I. assembled for the annual duty of attending the Reek Sunday pilgrimage on Croagh Patrick, where mountain rescue teams support pilgrims in need in a mission co-ordinated by Mayo M.R.T.



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The mountain is the location where pilgrims undertake to climb, often barefoot, to the chapel on the summit to attend mass celebrated by the local Archbishop of Tuam and the Papal Nuncio.

This duty can be traced by to the late 1960's when a request to the Order of Malta by Archbishop Joseph Walsh for a presence to help injured pilgrims. Galway M.R.T. joined in the duty in the mid 1970's bringing a mountain rescue stretcher to the upper section to assist on the more tricky terrain. The continuing requirement for a rescuer presence year long led to the formation of Mayo M.R.T. in 1990 who now co-ordination a rescue response involving all teams within M.R.I. who work from Saturday night through to Sunday evening.

The event requires extensive preparations in the months approaching Reek Sunday to facilitate the arrival of

150 mountain rescuers who require room for briefings, equipment checks and nourishment along with space to handover casualties to awaiting ambulances. Teams work on the upper sections of the mountain from the medical tent co-ordinated by Mayo M.R.T. along with their team doctor Jason Horan at the col through the various rescue stations up to the summit.

This year's pilgrimage occurred in fine weather and the pilgrim attendance was similar to recent years after the previous year being cancelled due to extreme weather conditions. There were 16 casualties on the mountain over the weekend, with one serious cardiac incident early in the morning requiring a multi-agency operation involving an A.E.D. and swift extraction by helicopter to hospital care, and the remaining incidents being less serious involving lower leg injuries.





Facing into 2017, recognition is needed that saving a life in an upland or mountainous environment requires commitment to the mission at many levels.

For the mountain rescue volunteer to assist the casualty they must be supported by the mountain rescue team in the provision of the following:



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The casualty requiring assistance is dependant on all these levels for support and regardless if the casualty is a visitor to or a resident of the island, it is vital that all stakeholders local councils, government departments and agencies, and other interested parties recognise their place in the mountain rescue mission.

**Saving Lives  
in the  
Mountains**

24 / 7 / 365

[www.mountainrescue.ie](http://www.mountainrescue.ie)



# SMALL CHANGE BIG DIFFERENCE

Mountain rescue teams are only possible due to the commitment of the volunteers who dedicate to being on call 24/7/365 to assist those in need.

These volunteers achieve this with minimal state support, and assume the costs of their own time and effort. We are required to reach out to the public to ask for support for the work that we do.

Please visit our website and give what you can.

*donate today*  
[www.mountainrescue.ie/donate](http://www.mountainrescue.ie/donate)

Alternatively you can make an online transfer via the details below

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# Saving Lives in the Mountains

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