



MOUNTAIN RESCUE IRELAND

Annual Report 2017

Saving Lives
in the
Mountains

24 / 7 / 365

mountainrescue.ie



Mourne MRT winter training
on the summit of Slieve Donard

Annual Report 2017

mountainrescue.ie



An Garda Síochána

The Mountain Rescue Teams across the island of Ireland, represented by Mountain Rescue Ireland, provide an invaluable resource. Interest in, and engagement with, the great outdoors continues to increase in Ireland. Fortunately, outdoor amenities throughout Ireland are plentiful and accessible with residents and visitors enjoying healthy activities such as hill walking, rock climbing, mountaineering and mountain biking.

Needless to say, activities of this nature bring certain risks of accidents and medical emergencies. These time sensitive incidents will often be in locations with challenging terrain and changeable weather conditions. It is a source of comfort and reassurance to the statutory emergency services and the public, that mountain rescue teams have the skill, commitment and expertise to assist in these challenging situations.

As with many voluntary emergency services, the commitment of Mountain Rescue volunteers is remarkable. I would like to thank Mountain Rescue Ireland and associated rescue and search dog teams for your commitment and dedication in 2017 and wish you all a safe and successful 2018.

Michael O'Sullivan
Assistant Commissioner

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Police Service of Northern Ireland

Can I put on record my appreciation on behalf of the PSNI to representatives of our local community who make up the volunteers of the mountain rescue teams as well as their families and partners who provide the necessary support networks.

The MRI personnel provide support not just to the PSNI within Northern Ireland but also to our local communities and at times visitors to the province. The selflessness and community ethos is a credit to those volunteers who not only willingly place themselves in difficult situations when actively rescuing individuals but do so in all weather conditions 24/7/365 on remote and in extremely challenging terrain.

MRI are fully committed and act with the utmost integrity as these remarkable individuals not only give up their time for rescue operations but also maintain their knowledge and skill sets for such arduous rescues as well as fund raising activities in their own time. It is also important to note and commend those MRI personnel behind the scenes who provide administrative and governance support to the frontline willing, committed volunteers.

I wish Mountain Rescue Ireland volunteers a safe and healthy 2018.

Nigel Goddard
Superintendent

mountainrescue.ie



A big thank you to Mountain Rescue Ireland Mountaineering Ireland's Perspective

Enjoying the adventure, thrill and responsibility of being in the mountains is the core ethos of mountaineers. Skills training, self-reliance and environmental respect are key aspects of responsible behaviour and safe practice in the mountains. 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 continue to 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
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 Ireland and the P.S.N.I. in 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, to represent and liaise on general matters with government, 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 2017 and presents the commitment and work of the teams dedicated to responding to those in need.

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

Donegal MRT

North West MRT

Sligo/Leitrim MRT

Mourne MRT

Mayo MRT

Galway MRT

SARDA (Ireland)

Dublin/Wicklow MRT

Glen of Imaal MRT

South Eastern MRA

Kerry MRT

M.R.I. Chairman's Report

2017 has been a year of sacrifice with the tragic loss of a mountain rescue volunteer and the crew of Rescue 116. However, all teams rallied around to support their mourning colleagues and sustained weeks of searching on the coast of Mayo for the crew of Rescue 116.

All requests to teams for emergency assistance were responded to, no matter whether day or night, sun or storm, continuing over 50 years of service to those who require emergency assistance in wilderness and mountainous environments.

There were 272 incidents in total and details of these can be found further on in this report. There have been internal changes within MRI during 2017 that have allowed us to dedicate our full attention of supporting our 11 front-line emergency response teams in the fulfilment of their mission.

It is self-evident that those who dedicate themselves to being on call 24/7/365 to provide emergency assistance in upland and mountainous areas require both operational and organisational support. Operational support is immediate and co-ordinated with effective integration within the emergency service spectrum.

However, organisational needs & support is an ongoing struggle. Teams require insurance to cover their volunteers, funding to train and maintain equipment, replace emergency response vehicles and provide base facilities for teams to operate from. Special recognition is due to the Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring T.D., Minister of State Seán Kyne T.D. and Deputy Hildegard Naughton T.D. for the support measures put in place for teams to replace aging vehicles and equipment under the CLÁR 2017 programme (Department of Rural and Community Development). This funding scheme provided much needed resources that allowed teams to replace first response and command vehicles, many of which had seen

over a decade of service. Teams benefited to the tune of over €360,000 through this scheme.

Ministers Ring and Kyne came to our rescue again later in the year with support for MRI insurance policy coverage, vital for the protection of our members in the performance of their duties and the second year his department has supported this annual need.

International interaction continued with attendance at the ICAR congress in Andorra in October where we keep up to date with international developments in best practice. MRI also attended a meeting with Mountain Rescue England & Wales (MREW) and Mountain Rescue Scotland (MRS) in March in what will hopefully continue to be regular and productive interactions.

MRI would also like to acknowledge the service of Joe Pond as MRI Treasurer who stood down after over a year of service. Looking to 2018, many challenges remain in delivering the necessary supports to enable the mountain rescue volunteers on the hill and these efforts are ongoing.

Finally, MRI would like to express its deepest sympathies to the family, friends and fellow team members of Kevin Hallahan, DWMRT member who died tragically on Crib Goch in September.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h'anam

Alan Carr
chairman@mountainrescue.ie

M.R.I. Secretary's Report

It has been my privilege to serve as Secretary of Mountain Rescue Ireland for another year. A significant portion of the job revolves around keeping a good line of communication open between the teams and the national officers, although, when I signed up as a trainee with my own team, SEMRA, many moons ago, I never for a minute thought that mountain rescue would entail quite so much time moving emails back and forth. But it's all worth it. Great strides were made by MRI this year in securing funding for much needed equipment and insurance cover, and, as this report bears out, teams

at their local level continue to develop in all sorts of ways, while at the same time maintaining a unique, professional, voluntary emergency service. It's great to be a part of all that. Despite the positives, the search and rescue community will always look back on 2017 with sadness when we remember our fallen comrades: Dáithí, Dara, Ciarán, Paul, Mark, Kevin. Our hearts go out to their families.

Ray Bradfield
secretary@mountainrescue.ie

2017 STATISTICS REPORT

2017 was again a busy year for mountain rescue. In total the 11 mountain rescue teams on the island of Ireland responded to 272 incidents, distributed as shown in the heat map below. 54% of these happened as a result of injury and 31% as a result of hikers getting lost. More than 77 incidents (28%) had to be dealt with in darkness.

There was, on average, one fatality per month in 2017. As with every other walk of life, technology is having a significant impact on MR operations. Someone can phone for help using their mobile phone. GPS receivers (often integrated into mobile phones) can pin-point someone's location on the mountain or a smartphone can be sent a link by text message that will give its location when clicked on and a casualty could be picked up by MR vehicle on a nearby forestry track very quickly. VHF radios, with their limited range, are being superseded by Tetra radios with planned universal coverage in the not too distant future.

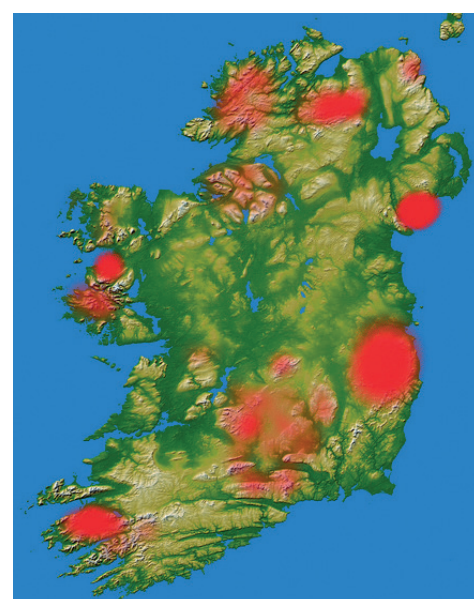
One result of all this is that many callouts are over very quickly, sometimes in as little as half an hour and very often in little over an hour. A quick calculation for one team over a three month period showed an average callout duration of 1 hour 15 minutes. This will vary greatly over the country but gives an indication of how things are changing.

So should we pack up our backpacks, go home and do online navigation and off-road driving courses from the Open University, with a little bit of Bear Grylls thrown

in in case the vehicle breaks down? A closer look at the situation says "No". Batteries can run out of power – for rescuers and casualties alike – especially in colder weather. If someone is unconscious a mobile phone or GPS isn't of much use. A helicopter isn't always available and can't fly in mountainous terrain in fog. Technology does not solve all our problems and there is still a need for the traditional muddy boots skills. Callouts, especially when they are searches, can last a considerable amount of time, sometimes days. Also, two, three or more callouts can happen in a single day. A callout in July in the South East seemed like a day in an outdoor ER department (see below).

We should not, of course, forget our old reliable and probably, in the right hands, our most high tech of tools which doesn't need any batteries – the search dog. I can remember one callout where, after many hours of unsuccessful searching in dense woodland and heather by upwards of 30 people and mounting concern about the state of the casualty overnight, a dog was brought in and found the casualty within 20 minutes. With their intelligence, stamina and high tech noses, it's unlikely that dogs will be superseded anytime soon.

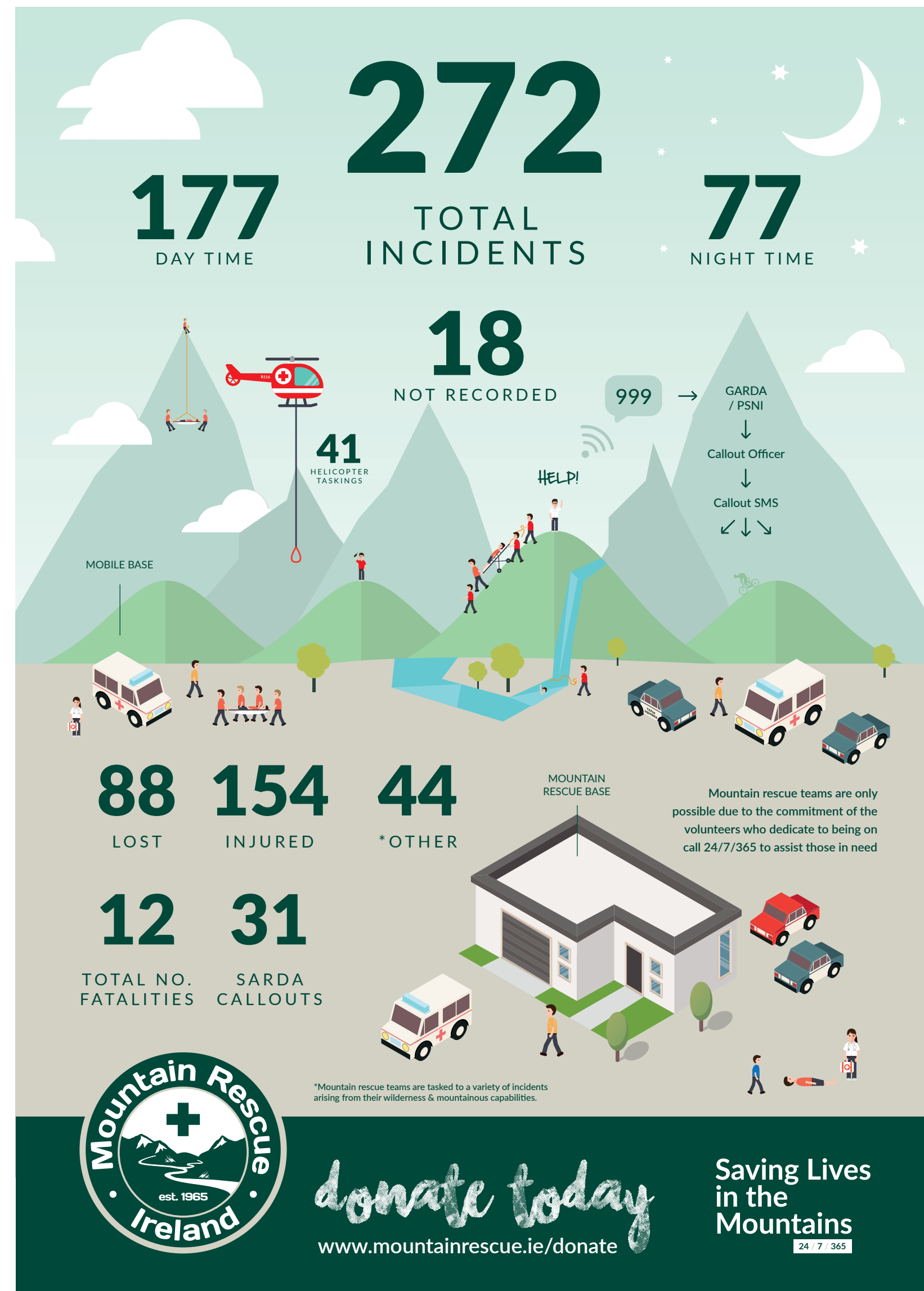
Incident Heat Map



Statistical Case Study

15/07/17 Comeraghs Rescue

Male casualty (1) with lower leg injury winched out by R117 heli. A female observer, on site, who reported being ill (casualty No. 2) was checked out by team doctor and then walked out with a friend. Separately, a male scout fell and injured his head and legs while scrambling (casualty 3) and a female scout, tripped and hurt her back (casualty 4). Another scout (casualty 5) fell while clearing up the area for the return of R117, which was then unable to land given fog. The injured scout (casualty 3) was then carried out while casualty no 5 was walked out. As the team were preparing for a debrief at base, a man with a facial injury (casualty 6) requested and was given medical treatment.



2017 FINANCIAL REPORT

Income 2017

• Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport	78,520
• Department of Rural & Community Development	88,816
• Team subscriptions	12,435
• Donations	2,086
• Sundry and training	2,000
• Fundraising	285

Total income for 2017 €184,142

Expenditure 2017

• Training and accreditation	4,363
• Insurance	77,629
• National conference and AGM	13,314
• Fundraising costs [incl. P.R. and advertising]	1,045
• Telephone	75
• Printing and office costs	3,634
• Website costs	400
• Mountain rescue and communications	16,490
• Travelling and entertainment	897
• Legal and professional	369
• Audit	1,574
• Bank charges	385
• Subscriptions and memberships	1,612
• Depreciation	63,292

Total expenditure for 2017 €185,079

Amortisation of government grants -€937
Surplus/(deficit) for the year €40,000
€39,063



CLAR 2017 PROGRAMME



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development

Mountain Rescue volunteers are committed 24/7/365, responding to requests for emergency assistance in upland and mountainous areas across the entire island of Ireland. This personal dedication extends to having to cover the costs of personal equipment and giving up time for fundraising, administration and the training necessary to maintain the wide range of skills required to play an effective part in the team effort.

A significant perennial challenge to the teams is that of vehicle maintenance and replacement. Mountain Rescue emergency response vehicles are required to deploy responders onto the hill in time critical situations: fading daylight; deteriorating weather conditions; casualties in need of immediate assistance, and so on. Over time, maintenance costs increase as vehicles age and this burden has occurred against a background where there was no ongoing funding scheme available to Mountain Rescue Teams to replace vehicles.

MRI was delighted when Deputy Michael Ring TD, Minister for Rural and Community Development, announced a scheme to support first response rescue services under the CLÁR 2017 programme, a funding

scheme dedicated to supporting rural areas. CLÁR Measure IV- First Response Support Measure allowed mountain rescue teams to seek funding to replace vehicles and equipment approaching the end of its operational lifespan.

MRI was honoured to welcome Deputy Sean Kyne TD, Minister of State at the Department of Rural and Community Development and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment with responsibility for Natural Resources, Community Affairs, and Digital Development, along with Deputy Tony McLoughlin TD, Teachta Dála for the Sligo/Leitrim constituency, to inspect these vehicles at our 2018 AGM before they returned to serve in their respective areas and allow their teams to continue to dedicate themselves to the service of those in need.

CLÁR 2017 forms part of the Government's Action Plan for Rural Development and is an example of the support that is needed for Mountain Rescue volunteers to continue in their mission. We are extremely grateful for this commitment from Government.



North West Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Michael McConville
Team Leader: Hazel Anderson
Website: www.nwmrt.org



2017 saw wide-ranging changes for the North West Mountain Rescue Team.. a major increase in callouts, three brand-new vehicles, a television appeal and a whole new management team and structure.

There were 43 incidents for which we were either tasked or held on standby (38 actual callouts), up from 27 last year, which took 187 hours to resolve (over double from 90 last year) including:

- Extensive and technical searches for Vulnerable Missing Persons on Cave Hill in Belfast during the summer months.
- A three-day search for a VMP on Belle Isle in County Fermanagh in conjunction with RNLI, PSNI and CRS.
- Injured and lost walkers on Cuilcagh Mountain, Banagher Glen, Knocklady Mountain, Ballycastle, Cave Hill and Divis Mountain.
- Assist on a major rescue operation with Mourne Mountain Rescue Team, PSNI, NI Ambulance Service and H.M. Coastguard for 73 Army cadets and leaders who got into difficulties in the Mourne Mountains.
- Assistance to Health Trusts during extreme snow and ice conditions, getting Nursing and Care staff to isolated patients who required care in order to remain at home.

There were 114 training exercises lasting around 575 hours and 93 PR, demo and fundraising events which took up almost 360 hours.

Adding up all of the individual recorded commitment hours, given freely by over 64 members, our volunteers collectively gave over 13½ thousand hours to the work of the team.

2017 also saw an increase in liaisons with other teams and rescue agencies both statutory and voluntary, throughout the UK and Ireland, assisting in operations and conducting joint exercises with e.g. Galloway,

Donegal, Mayo and Sligo/Leitrim MRTs, RNLI, Irish Coast Guard and HM Coastguard, PSNI, CRS and NIAS.

There was also continuing liaison with community groups and organisations, to help raise both awareness of our work and much needed funds, from Ballymena Runners to South West Area Hospital, Fermanagh Ramblers, Mid Ulster Walking Group and Cookstown Fire Cadets! Our major annual fundraising and community events- the Belfast Hills Walk in May and the Broughshane Run at the end of July, both of which were organised by NWMRT raised significant funding and also increased our presence and liaison with local communities.

2017 saw significant press, TV and social media coverage. BBC NI featured NWMRT as one of their Charity Appeals with a 5 minute film broadcast throughout N. Ireland.

At the end of 2016, the Department of Justice in the Government of Northern Ireland announced substantial extra funding and NWMRT received a proportion of that, to purchase three vehicles in 2017.

The most significant development in NWMRT in 2017 however, was its restructure which brought in a new level of Trustees.

Although gender does not play any role in Mountain Rescue, nevertheless three women, Hazel Anderson, Gillian Crawford and Pamela Ellis are now Team Leader, Treasurer and Secretary respectively, the first time any Northern Ireland team has had so many women in their top management.

Finally, thanks go out to all the people outside of the team who have helped to raise funds, who have donated monies, given time in instruction and help or simply just moral support, particularly the partners and families of volunteer team members.

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Team Chair: Dave Goddard
Team Coordinators: Neville Watson, Ian McCracken, Andrew McKee, Martin McMullan
Website: www.mournemrt.org

Mourne Mountain Rescue Team



During 2017 the team responded to 45 callouts in the local area and in addition sent crews to Mayo on four occasions to support the search for the missing crew members of R116.

We have worked with colleagues from PSNI, NIAS, Garda and Coast Guard from both jurisdictions. Helicopters have featured regularly and we have worked with crews from ICG R116, PSNI air support, HMCG R999 and the NI Air Ambulance. The PSNI's 'locate' system has been in use for over a year now in SAR across NI and has proven to be functional. We continue to make good use of SARCALL to initiate callouts and members have been using the system effectively. Currently we have 29 full team members, 1 trainee member and are about to recruit a further 6 trainee members over the coming months.

Internal Training

Structured team training has continued as per the annual training calendar covering all aspects of team operations and using a variety of both training sessions as well as realistic scenarios - topics included: Search Techniques and Search Management, First Aid and Casualty Management, Standard, Intermediate and Advanced Technical Systems, Communication including Callout Procedures, Vehicles and Equipment (In particular new equipment), Helicopter Operations and Personal Mountain Competence.

As part of the on-going up-skilling in medical capability, much of the above structured training included or was devoted to casualty care. Additional training was also delivered for those pursuing the cas care exam/certificate which culminated with the cas care exam. Planning is already underway to take another group through the cas care syllabus, while REC will be delivered for those requiring interim certification or who do not wish to pursue cas care.

External Training

Above and beyond the structured training, the team continues to pursue other training and development opportunities for team members during 2017, these included; Scottish Winter Training at Glemore Lodge, Reek Sunday, WEMSI Physician & EMT Courses at Glenmore Lodge, Galloway Exercise.

Internal Recruitment, Training and Assessments

As a part of the team's on-going commitment to ensure continuity of service 6 trainee members who were invited to join the team as trainees in the previous period, continued to undertake training and where invited forward for assessment. Unfortunately one of the trainees left the team due to work commitments while four of the remaining trainees successfully met the standard required to be recommended for full membership - one member continues training.

External Assessment

As NIMCCRCC has been replaced by NISAR, we like all the other MRI teams now avail of the MRI Peer Review process to prove competence to NISAR and its members. The review and in particular the scenario was set to test/display all aspects of team operations in addition to the general checks on management and governance. The team had 22 members participate in full and exhibit the team's competence to external observers. The feedback was exceptional and representative of the efforts put in throughout the preceding period by every single team member.

New Base

We are still waiting on a further update from LIDL and their planning application for a new store in Newcastle. LIDL agreed last year that they would provide the Team with a portion of land on their site for the construction of a new MMRT base.

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Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue

Team Chair: Edmund Fagan
Team Leader: Mark Flynn
Website: www.dwmrt.ie



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CALLOUTS

The Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team (DWMRT) is a registered charity and company limited by guarantee with 58 rescue team members as well as associate and honorary members.

Sadly we will forever remember 2017 for the tragic loss of our friend and colleague Kevin Hallahan who was killed during a training exercise in Wales on 30th September. The team would like to thank the mountain rescue and emergency services community in Ireland, the UK and internationally for the support and comfort provided to the team and to Kevin's family.

In 2017 we welcomed 16 new members who graduated from the probationary training programme. 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. DWMRT work hand in hand with Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue Team and a joint callout officer arrangement has been established.

Without a secure source of funds, fundraising is a permanent and ongoing challenge for the team. We are very grateful for the support we received from a variety

of sources in 2017: individual donations, corporate grants, pro bono services, community funds, state agency supports and from participants at our fundraising events. The Department of Rural and Community Development CLÁR Programme was a very welcome and substantial opportunity in 2017, allowing the team to purchase a new vehicle. The team would like to thank those in the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and Mountain Rescue Ireland leadership who were very helpful throughout the robust and transparent application and procurement process.

DWMRT has three main fundraising events of our own 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 Glenmalur, 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 hill-runners and 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 very high standard.

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Team Chair: Brendan Beirne
Team Leader: Christiaan Clotworthy
Website: www.wmr.ie

Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue



80
CALLOUTS

Operations

Another busy year on all fronts with 80 callouts in the calendar year. Glendalough continues to be our busiest area, with Lug and Sugarloaf, although joint second, a good way behind. The busiest month was August with 13 call outs followed by February, March and December with 9 each. Although mid-week call outs are on the increase, Saturday and Sunday remain the busiest days of the week.

Injuries while hiking were the biggest factor in the callout stats, with getting lost second and missing persons third. We dealt with three fatalities this year also. In the "Injuries while hiking" category, 49% were lower body injuries, as in hips, femurs, knees and lower leg in general.

Training

We ran our Glen Team Deputy Team Leader / Callout Officer training program again this year. This consists of five modules ranging from CISM, land owners and access and initiating a call out to Search Management for Incident Commanders. The program was run over five full weekends between January and June so it was a huge time commitment for participants. We are glad to say that we had participants from Dublin Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team and South East Mountain Rescue Association taking part. Regular weekly training continued throughout the year as well. On top of that, we had medical recertifications and Swift Water Technician training courses as well.

Finance

The now well established "Moonlight Challenge" continues to be by far our biggest annual Fundraiser and as a result we were able to replace our Mitsubishi L-200 with a new first response Toyota Hi-Lux vehicle, Call Sign "Glen Charlie" in recognition of the support received over the years from the Charlie Froud Foundation. While the Moonlight Challenge and Froud Foundation funds

support capital expenditure needs, the Coast Guard Administered Grant, WCC grant and public donations contribute to the day to day running of the team and this year we were also fortunate to be able to receive further funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development through the CLÁR initiative. This funding allowed us to replace our aging Land Rover Defender with another Toyota Hi-Lux, Glen Mobile 3.

Equipment

We have updated our Swift Water Rescue Technician equipment and storage. Medical bags and equipment, technical rescue equipment continues to be replaced as needed and we have purchased two new Ferno stretchers which are now in service. We are also implementing a new Equipment tagging, storage, replenishment and recording system.

Remembrance

GoIMRT would like to pass on our condolences to the families of the crew of Rescue - 116 who were lost last March. We also remember the family and friends of DWMRT member Kevin Hallahan who was tragically killed in a training accident last year in Wales.

2018

There are plans for further development of Glen Base with more parking, a vehicle wash bay and some external training facilities to be added. We wish the newly elected Committee the very best for the coming years.

They are as follows:

Team Leader: Christiaan Clotworthy
Chair: Brendan Beirne
Vice Chair: Cindy Doyle
Secretary: Alan Murphy
Asst Secretary: Mark Casciani
Treasurer: Diarmaid Scully
Deputy Treasurer: Marie Cullen

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South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association

Team Chair: Roy Johnston
Team Leader: Pat Holland
Website: www.semra.ie



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CALLOUTS

SEMRA (South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association) is the mountain rescue service provider for the south-east of Ireland, covering from the southern edge of Wicklow down as far as Cork and including the Galtees, Comeraghs, Blackstairs, Knockmealdowns and other ranges. It is a member of the all-Ireland representative body, Mountain Rescue Ireland and operationally responds to An Garda Síochána and other primary response agencies.

SEMRA has been serving the South East for 40 years and this year, its birthday year, it responded to its 400th call out. There are 46 full members at present, 45 operational and one support member, all volunteers. They live across the entire south-east and many are members of their local mountaineering or hill walking clubs ensuring local knowledge and a good relationship with local people. We have had 29 call outs this year, from all parts of the south-east. We also have a trainee class of c. 10 individuals in the process of formation. They will train for the best part of a year before becoming full members and being placed on the operational call out list.

In 2017 SEMRA has dealt with the following operational types: five cases of lower leg injuries, three cases of other injuries, four medical cases, one fatality on the hill, two missing persons, one found deceased, over ten cases of lost walkers or lost walking groups, and two cases of

lost mountain bikers. Locations included several in the Comeraghs, Galtees as well as Sliabhnamon, Lough Gur, Ballyhouras, Arra mountains, the Devil's Bit, and Kilworth. During the year the team purchased a new Land Rover Discovery vehicle to replace a ten year old Land Rover Defender, aided by a substantial grant from the Department of Rural and Community Development CLÁR programme and the financial support of UCIT, a community charity funding body.

In 2015 we received a VW Rockton thanks to a Sports Capital grant from the Dept of Rural and Community Development which has become very useful to us as a team transport vehicle.

We now have a vehicle fleet with three vehicles of low age and mileage, a very good situation to be in. We hope to be able to replace our fourth vehicle, a second ten year old Land Rover Defender in the coming years. Our Long Way Round fundraising event was very successful, bringing in essential funds to keep the team running. It costs €45,000 to run the team per annum of which we receive routinely receive c. €7,000 from government. We also gratefully acknowledge government funding, via Mountain Rescue Ireland, for our insurance. We would not be able to afford this insurance from our own budget. We also acknowledge MRI Development Funding for our Tetra radios.

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Team Chair: Henry Smyth
Team Leader: Gerry Tobin
Website: www.sardaireland.com

Search and Rescue Dog Association



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CALLOUTS

2017 was a very positive year for SARDA, with the addition of three new dog teams to the callout list. In March 2017, Mick Grant and Ziggy got through the tough 3-days assessments in Wicklow and successfully qualified as a search dog team. The pair have already responded to several taskings from the Gardaí and Mountain Rescue. Mick is a very experienced dog handler and a long-standing member of South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association. The year also ended on a high, with two more dog teams successfully passing their assessments in November and earning those coveted red tags. Lyla, with her handler Louise Burgoyne, and Murphy, with Éadaoin O'Gorman, trained extremely hard in the months prior to the assessments, and all that work certainly paid off! Each dog team added to the list of qualified SARDA Ireland dog teams is a huge asset to search and rescue in Ireland.

In other news, 2017 saw the passing of retired search dog Hugo. Hugo and his handler Jarlath Folan (who is a member of Galway Mountain Rescue Team) qualified as a search dog team in 2010. During his career, Hugo attended several call-outs with Jarlath and had one remarkable find to his name before retiring in 2014. Another search dog, Koiru, also retired from search work last year. Koiru qualified in 2010 and was on the callout list for more than seven years. She is now enjoying well-earned time off with her owner Pauliina Kauppila, who is a member of Castletownbere Coast Guard.

We are happy to note that there has been huge interest from the public to become involved with SARDA. Many new people have started to volunteer as 'dogsbody' and to assist with fundraising. There are also several more prospective handlers and some very promising young dogs now on the team.

A group of our handlers and dogs travelled to the UK last April to train together with the Oldham MRT and SARDA England. This was a very successful initiative, and all the

SARDA Ireland members who attended the event found it very beneficial.

We were successful in our application for a new vehicle from the 2017 CLÁR programme run by the Department of Rural and Community Development. Our Ford Transit is currently being customized for our needs and will enable rapid deployment of dog teams to wherever they are needed.

For some of the incidents last year, we deployed more than one dog in an effort to expedite area coverage when possible. This 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.

All in all, we had a great year of training with increased attendances and also working with international handlers and trainers to share knowledge. We hope to do more of this in the coming year. We are all looking forward to a successful 2018, focusing on further development of our profile and also aiming to increase 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



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CALLOUTS

Galway Mountain Rescue Team had a busy year in 2017 and there was a considerable focus on training and equipment-upgrade projects. Through funding from the CLÁR programme, we upgraded our VHF radio network from the old analogue system to a digital system which offers significant improvements for our communications and allows us to continuously monitor the location of every team member on the mountain. We also expanded our vehicle fleet, again using CLÁR funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development, through the purchase of a new 4WD vehicle which will greatly improve our response capability for years to come.

Galway MRT had 16 callouts in 2017 and these included the rescue of two benighted visitors from Diamond Hill in poor weather conditions, the rescue of a lone Polish walker suffering from hypothermia on Ben Corr, the rescue of a woman with a lower leg injury from Mount

Gable and the extraction of two walkers benighted in Derryclare Forest. The most significant call out of the year was the search for an overdue solo walker on Leenane Hill in March and the subsequent recovery of his body to the roadside. This was a major team effort and it was executed with valuable assistance from our friends from Mayo MRT.

We welcomed four new members to the team in 2017, but we were sorry to lose a few older members through retirement during the year too. The appointment of new members to the team in December brought our operational numbers to 31 who, together with our valuable non-operational members, logged over 3,500 person-hours of effort in support of their team. Galway MRT 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 MRT, as we see this as being instrumental to our development.



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Team Chair: Colm Byrne
Team Leader: Robert Hunt
Website: www.mayomrt.com

Mayo Mountain Rescue Team



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CALLOUTS

This year the Mayo team have been reflecting on what it is to be a member of the mountain rescue community. The tragic deaths of members of the rescue services while on active duty on land, sea and air, reminds us very forcibly not so much of the inherent dangers in what we do, as in the fact that we are a small family who are closely connected by what we do.

It would be very easy to forget that as with any family, we also need to look after each other. This year, more than any other, this has been emphasised. How we do this better is our challenge for 2018.

The team were very saddened by the tragic loss of the Rescue 116 crew and offered extended support in the search operation in and around Blacksod. The Mayo team continues to be one of the most active teams in Ireland with over 40 callouts a year, not including Reek Sunday.

Separately, over 120 Mountain Rescue volunteers dealt with 15 casualties in tough conditions during Reek Weekend. We are very proud of the skilled volunteers in our medical tent who saved the life of another cardiac casualty. There were several life-threatening incidents in 2017 and to have the skills and equipment on hand is in no short part due to the enormous work of the MMRT Reek sub-committee's preparations, unerring in their commitment to planning.

Our thanks also to the great support from our fellow MRI colleagues; GMRT, SEMRA, Sligo/Leitrim, DMRT, DWMRT, Glen of Imaal, NWMRT, Mourne MRT, ICRO, the PSNI and Calder Valley who worked tirelessly on the hill, and to Coast Guard Rescue 118, Irish Air Corps and the Order of Malta.

During 2017, Mayo developed and ran a steep ground training course in Sligo which will be run again in 2018. The team continues to be strongly involved with MRI

both in running ongoing national training events and with MMRT members currently serving as MRI Officers. MMRT join several other MRI teams in participating with Goldhawk productions for the ITV/TV3 series on rescue services. We hope this will both help garner support for MRI services and also bring home the personal benefits of volunteering to the general public.

MMRT held a very successful first Moonlight in Mayo fundraising walk which the team plan to make an annual event in our fundraising calendar.

Through the Department of Rural and Community Development CLÁR programme, MMRT have built a new and much needed fit for purpose Incident Command Vehicle. MMRT continued participation in the Croagh Patrick Stakeholders Group's discussion the condition of the mountain. The Stakeholders Group are nearing an agreement to commence the initial phase of restoration and preservation of the path.



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Annual Report 2017

Annual Report 2017

Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Ciaran Davis
Team Leader: Iain Mounsey
Website: www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie



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CALLOUTS

Incidents

During 2017 SLMRT conducted 6 searches, 5 rescues and logged over 290 person hours. These were a mix of operating with other agencies including other MRTs, Gardaí, Irish Coast Guard, RNLI, HSE and Fire Services.

Training

Training this year comprised of 30 sessions, covering the following: REC 3 & 4, Night Navigation, PPE Inspection Course, Joint exercise with RNLI, Joint Exercises with neighbouring teams, Communications and Medical Refreshers

Events

Assistance was given to local mountain-centred events, as well as the national exercise of Croagh Patrick. Participation in the local St Patrick's day parades gave us good visibility.

Fundraising

Thanks to the national efforts of MRI, the team was granted funding under the CLÁR scheme from the Department of Rural and Community Development. This funding of €35,000 enabled us to upgrade all our equipment; medical, communications, ropes and rigging, and allowed a full fit out of our VW Rockton. This has made a vast improvement to the team's resources in being able to provide a professional service to the local community.

During the year the team held several major fundraising events beginning with the Pub Quiz for which we thank our hosts, Thomas Connolly's, Sligo. In July, the annual Ben Bulbin Night Walk continued our fundraising efforts with around 200 supporters enjoying the guided hike to the Prow in the dark. And at Halloween we hit the streets of Sligo for our annual street bucket-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!

Members

Currently we have 19 active members with six probationers ready for assessment. For the Q1 of 2018 we will start recruitment again. Over the course of 2017, team members gave up over 2,200 hrs of their time to commit to incidents, training and fundraising.

Vehicles

SLMRT has three vehicles in use, a 2008 Ford Transit van, a 2015 VW Transporter and a 2004 Land Rover Discovery. During 2017 the Land Rover was retired from service in an effort to reduce costs and repairs.

Team Base

The team is currently housed within an area vacated by 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.

Equipment

At the beginning of the year the team purchased a new Ferno Titan stretcher which was funded by a generous donation from the family of the late Paddy McCaffery, Kinlough, Co. Leitrim.

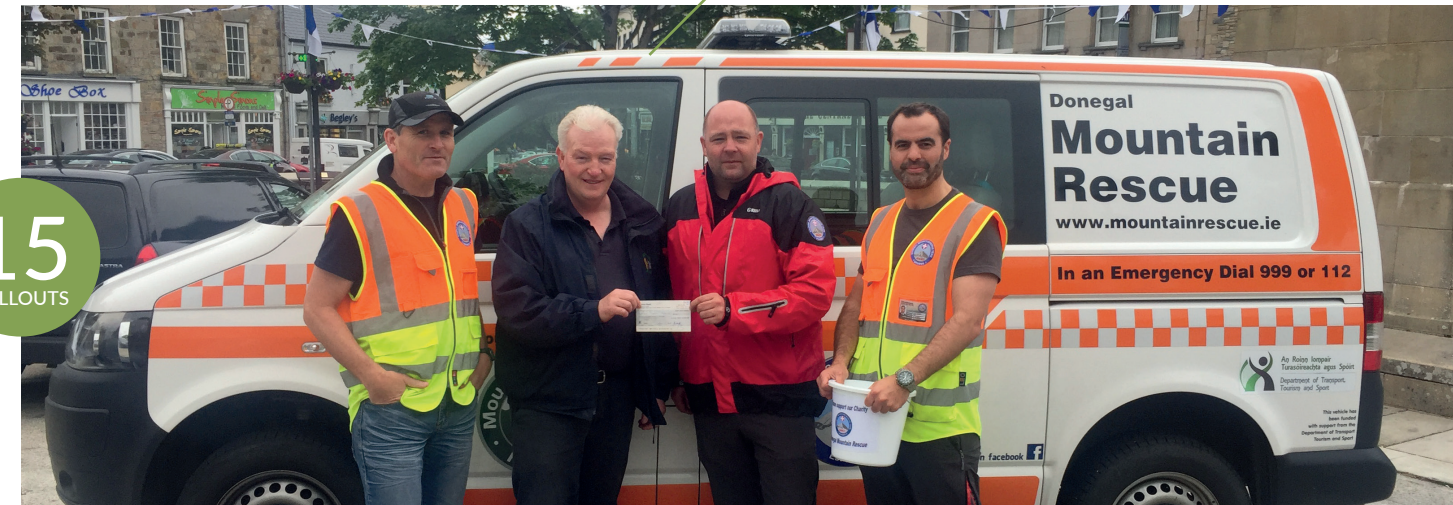
CLÁR funding has enabled the upgrading of a huge amount of equipment. For the team this was a very welcome and vital source of funding which has enabled us to further our high standards of team training and the care of our casualties.

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Team Chair: Brian Pat Murray
Team Leader: Garret Wilson
Website: www.facebook.com/DonegalMRT

Donegal Mountain Rescue Team



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CALLOUTS

To open we would like to recognise the deceased members of R116 and DWMRT who died this past year. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h'anam. 2017 was an active year resulting in over 3,687 man-hours accumulated for incidents, training, fund raising and administration. Additionally, there were coastal searches following the R116 tragedy.

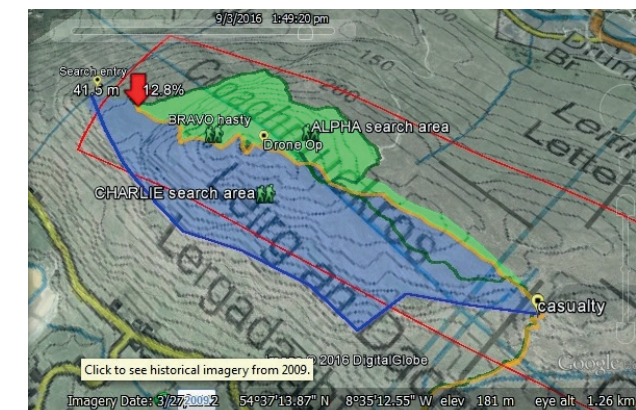
The team mainly encountered lower limb injuries or exposure cases in the higher regions. Outside of the typical lower leg and arm injuries we also had the calls for the stranded sheep as well as other animals needing extraction from inaccessible places. Reek Sunday was another busy day on the hill for all and showed great inter-team cooperation on the day.

In August we had a challenging two day search for a missing climber in the Bingorm/ Slieve Snaght range with difficult conditions under foot that saw R118 tasked for coverage as well as assistance provided by SLMRT, NWMRT, Bunbeg CG and the Gardaí as well as a local family that provided logistical support with the search, food, shelter, helicopter landing area and ICU set up. Ultimately it was not the outcome that we all wanted but all was handled with the utmost professionalism and

dignity. We have nine team members REC 4 qualified - there are now three Emergency 1st Responders and there is now an Emergency Medical Technician as part of the team's collective experience. Many exercises then followed that allowed us to practice and hone our first aid skills as well as technical rope work on steep ground as we find in the county.

We had by year end 2017 a second hand vehicle that we purchased and modified for use as our Mobile Incident Control Unit and two second hand jeeps completely kitted out to replace the previous vehicles that used to end their callout day in a local garage. So we now have one ICU, one Rockton and two jeeps in our fleet. A lot of administration man hours were put into grant applications, vehicle design and fit out to ensure we could have the best possible outcome for the monies expended by the team.

The end of our year as always focuses on those that transition the safe passage from probation to a fully fledged member. Focus for 2018 is on recruitment of new members that are already at a proficient level of Mountain Skills so as to focus the probationary time and training on up-skilling these members.



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AN UNIMAGINABLE LOSS

On the morning of 14th March 2017, the Irish search and rescue (SAR) community and the worldwide SAR community woke to the unthinkable news that Rescue 116, the Irish Coast Guard SAR Helicopter based at Dublin Airport was lost at sea with four crewmembers on board off the coast of Mayo.



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News filtered through that one of the crew members the captain; Captain Dara Fitzpatrick was located but unfortunately did not survive. A search unprecedented in Irish history was launched to locate the wreckage of Rescue 116 and her crew. Anxious seconds turned to minutes, minutes to hours, hours to days. Co-pilot Mark Duffy's body was recovered from the wreckage 12 days after the helicopter went down. Those anxious days turned to months, with the whole of Ireland and the wider SAR community praying that the sea would return the two remaining crew members Winch Operator Paul Ormsby and Winchman Ciarán Smith. Although the search has been officially stood-down, still to this day there are searches ongoing hoping against all odds for the bodies of Paul and Ciarán to be located.

When that bell sounds to scramble a launch of the helicopter for a rescue mission, whether for somebody who is lost or in distress at sea, up a mountain, involved in a traffic accident or urgent need of a hospital transfer, we always think of the crew of the helicopter but there was

more on watch that faithful night. There were the two engineers waiting for the return of their helicopter to do its routine maintenance. These engineers are as important as the helicopter crew is, they keep the machine in good working order ready for its next mission. You have the Coast Guard controller sitting in the co-ordination centre keeping over-watch for the rescue mission, that night will not be easily forgotten, by those who were on watch and their colleagues at the Dublin Base and the 3 other bases, Rescue 115 Shannon, Rescue 117 Waterford, Rescue 118 Sligo.

Mountain Rescue (MR) & helicopters go hand in hand, from when the Irish Air Corps first took possession of the Alouette III helicopter back in the early 60s. Many a mountain rescue mission has been successfully completed with assistance of the Irish Air Corps. This responsibility moved to the Irish Marine Emergency Services to now the Irish Coast Guard helicopter service provided by CHC.

The close links between MR and SAR Helicopters in Ireland is evident by the fact that current helicopter crew members are involved or have a history of involvement in Ireland's mountain rescue teams, John Manning Dublin/Wicklow MRT, Mick Treacy Dublin/Wicklow MRT, John Mc Shane Donegal MRT and Mike Sandover Kerry MRT.

With the close co-operation, ground school, flight familiarisation and operations, friendships develop between Mountain Rescue Teams and their local SAR Heli base. This was the same for the crew of Rescue 116 who provided support for the Dublin/Wicklow MRT, Glen of Imaal MRT and Mourne MRT. As a member of Dublin/Wicklow MRT, I was the MRT liaison officer arranging all training with the crew from the Dublin heli base; I always regarded Rescue 116 and the crew as our machine, our support - our friends.



I do not claim to be a close friend of the crewmembers who lost their lives, but am I glad that I can say I knew them and worked with them in saving lives in Ireland's wild and remote places.

I knew Paul the longest from his old days with No 3 Support Wing in the Air Corps stationed at Baldonnel. Paul would be a familiar face of the Alouette III heli crew at our team's heli training exercises and joint live operations. I knew both Mark the Co-Pilot and Ciarán to a lesser degree.

My first meeting with Captain Dara Fitzpatrick was on her first MRT training exercise in the Wicklow hills as the captain of the heli with Mick Treacy as Winch Operator in the Sikorsky S61. Training quickly turned to a live incident for a hillwalker with a leg injury near Kelly's Lough on Lugnaquilla. The weather was bad and Dara and the crew of Rescue 116 got us as close as they could to deploy MRT personnel to the incident site - another successful rescue.

A week before that tragic accident, I was in Larch Hill Scout Centre in the foothills of the Dublin mountains for

a MR training exercise. I heard the unmistakable noise of the heli on its approach to a landing site "I wasn't aware that we had the heli coming in for training" ... "We don't" was the reply.

“ There are no words that can explain the anguish of such a loss to the family and friends of the crewmembers who lost their lives in tragic circumstances that night.

With curiosity, I made my way to the landing site to see a bunch of young sea scouts crowding around the crew, with Captain Dara Fitzpatrick like the pied piper as the kids followed her around eagerly listening to every word she said. This was the last time I saw Dara, doing what she loved.

There are no words that can explain the anguish of such a loss to the family and friends of the crewmembers who lost their lives in tragic circumstances that night.

We, as a search and rescue community and a nation pray and light a candle for both Paul and Ciarán in the hope that they will be returned in order to bring closure for their families and friends.

No matter if you are a paid professional or a volunteer professional, Coast Guard Heli Crew, Fire Fighter, Health Service, Civil Defence, Coast Guard ground team, search dogs, Order of Malta, St. John Ambulance, Red Cross, RNLI, there is one truth, they selflessly go to help others in their time of need.

These ordinary people doing extraordinary things - on behalf of Mountain Rescue Ireland, our thoughts and prayers remain with the family and friends of Dara, Mark, Paul and Ciarán. You may be gone, but not forgotten.

'Go Mairidís Beo'.



WHY USE A SEARCH DOG?

Search dogs will cover large areas of ground quickly and can reach locations that are difficult to access for regular search teams. They are extremely effective in the very situations where human sight is most limited: in the dark, in dense woods or heavy undergrowth, in debris and even under snow cover.

The dogs can work anytime, day or night, in all kinds of weather. Since the dogs primarily use their noses instead of their eyes, they are able to work efficiently even when other resources may be hampered by dark or foggy conditions.

SARDA dog teams can travel to any location in Ireland to support the emergency services as required. Many of our dog handlers are also members of Mountain Rescue and Irish Coast Guard teams. SARDA operates under the umbrella of Mountain Rescue Ireland as one of its member teams.

As search locations can often be remote, our dogs are trained to work with the Coast Guard, Air Corps and Garda helicopters.



“Despite the associated demands, this hugely rewarding and enjoyable endeavour is something that becomes a way of life for most handlers – and the satisfaction of providing an additional resource for Search & Rescue is immeasurable.

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During a search, the SARDA dog teams are directed by the search and rescue agency responsible for operational control of the incident and work in close cooperation with all state and voluntary services involved. They will search specific areas as designated by the overall search coordinator. All our dogs are accredited safe with stock and can work in farmland, forestry, urban areas, alongside waterways, seashore and upland areas.

What type of dogs are suitable?

When selecting a dog for training, character and conformation are more important than breed. Very large dogs are often too heavy and slow-moving for search work. Very small dogs lack the speed and stamina necessary to cover the large distances involved. All dogs can scent well, but some types are more amenable to training to focus on human scent. Additionally some breeds of dogs are known to have better scenting capability than others. The dog needs to be trainable and intelligent with a strong play drive and a desire to please the owner. Very independent-minded types – such as terriers – are harder to train. Most SARDA dogs are working breeds, such as border collies, retrievers, shepherds and spaniels.

Ideally, it is best to begin with a young puppy which is specifically intended for search work. This will enable the handler and dog to develop a good working relationship. Older dogs are only suitable if they already have a strong working bond with their owner.

Dogs initially go through two tests: an obedience test and a stock test. The stock test is done by sheep farmers who are familiar with observing dogs' behaviour around sheep and can make a firm assessment based on this to guarantee that the dog is safe around livestock. If either of these tests are failed the pup is not allowed continue with its training until it has successfully completed them.

Qualification and Testing

Once a dog team, which consists of the handler and their dog, is considered to be sufficiently advanced in their training and has passed their pre-assessment, they may proceed forward to their novice assessment.

During the assessment, the dog teams are evaluated by external unbiased assessors who observe them covering specific staged search areas. They are required to successfully complete four searches of approximately two

hours duration each in mountain terrain over a period of two to three days.

Reliable indication by the dog is imperative. If the dog has found a person but failed to indicate this to the handler for any reason, the team will fail their assessment. Equally important is comprehensive coverage of the search area. Should the handler fail to cover an area thoroughly, they will be required to complete one or two additional search areas in a satisfactory manner in order to pass their assessment.

Weather conditions may be taken into account. In the event that the weather conditions at the time make it impractical for a search area to be completed, the dog team will be required to search one or two additional areas successfully in order to pass their assessment.

High Standards

SARDA dogs have extraordinary demands placed upon them and are trained from a very young age to a very high standard of ability and response. All SARDA Ireland dog teams are assessed by external assessors from NSARDA UK. They are subsequently reassessed on a yearly basis at novice level and every three years at advanced level. This arduous qualification process means that the dog teams can confidently work together with mountain rescue teams and any other agencies that may request our assistance.

A qualified handler is expected to be competent in mountainous environments. For this reason SARDA teams throughout the UK and Ireland have standards to reach before they will be tasked to these kind of terrains. Most of our handlers are either Mountain Rescue or Coast Guard personnel, or they will have achieved their Mountain Skills assessment and have a First Aid qualification.

Search dog training is a huge undertaking. Most dog teams will train at least twice weekly and attend up to seven national training weekends yearly; these events take place in all parts of the country. Generally, training a dog up to assessment standard takes a minimum of two years.

Despite the associated demands, this hugely rewarding and enjoyable endeavour is something that becomes a way of life for most handlers – and the satisfaction of providing an additional resource for Search & Rescue is immeasurable.



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IN LOVING MEMORY

KEVIN HALLAHAN



On September 30th, 2017, our friend and colleague, Kevin Hallahan, died in an accident on a mountain rescue training weekend in North Wales. Kevin was part of a group that were ascending Snowdon via the Crib Goch route when the accident occurred.

Kevin, known by callsign Wicklow 5.6, joined Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team (DWMRT) in 2011. He quickly established himself as a valued and highly motivated team member. Kevin was a leader, an organiser, and a larger-than-life character within the team; selflessly helping those in need. He was a man who cared for those around him, supporting, mentoring and always looking out for his teammates with a kind word and his friendly smile.

Outdoor pursuits were a huge part of Kevin's life. He loved the outdoors and excelled at all he turned his hand to. If you were out with Kevin, you knew you would have a great day. Conversation always flowed when Kevin was around, and sometimes, it could be difficult to get a word in. Start a topic of conversation and Kevin was off, very knowledgeable and always with a story to tell. It would be easy to think that Kevin just lived for the outdoors, but family was most important, especially his wife and three daughters, to whom he was devoted.

Thanks are owed to far more than can be mentioned here, but there are some who must be mentioned. The response to the incident by Llanberis, Ogwen Valley, and Aberglaslyn Mountain Rescue Teams was exemplary. Captain Kate Simonds, and her crew, from HM Coastguard Caernarfon did a heroic job airlifting Kevin off the mountain in very difficult circumstances. North Wales Police, Bangor Hospital, and the North West Wales Coroner's Office showed great compassion, and absolute professionalism, in every interaction.

“ Kevin was a leader, an organiser, and a larger-than-life character within the team; selflessly helping those in need.

Kevin immersed himself in mountain rescue, giving his time to callouts, training, and fundraising events. He was always there for his colleagues in DWMRT, so it was an honour for the team to accompany him on his final callout. Mountain Rescue Ireland's support was greatly appreciated by DWMRT at that time. And Kevin's wife, Catherine, expresses her thanks to DWMRT, and the wider mountain rescue community, for the support shown to her, their children, and Kevin's immediate and extended family.

Kevin touched the lives of so many, and all were better for it. He will be sorely missed by all who were privileged to know him. Kevin Hallahan, Wicklow 5.6, still on the hill.



THE HOLY MOUNTAIN TEACH NA MIASA CROAGH PATRICK



Over 120 Mountain Rescue volunteers dealt with 15 casualties during Reek Weekend in tough conditions. Extremely heavy persistent showers meant both the path and the summit were very rough under foot. Most incidents happened on the shoulder and cone of Croagh Patrick.



It was a full and busy weekend for the MMRT but this national operation was really only possible with the support and coordination of our fellow MR colleagues this year from Galway, SEMRA, Sligo/Leitrim, Donegal, DWMRT, Glen of Imaal, NWMRT, Mourne MRT, ICRO, the PSNI and Calder Valley who worked tirelessly on the hill.

From Friday to late Sunday night it was non-stop communication, coordination and rescue, rolling out the shift system to manage the mass casualty evacuation over the 24 hour period.

Since 1997 the MMRT have organised and co-ordinated the rescue and emergency care services for the approximately 25,000 pilgrims who climb Croagh Patrick on the last weekend of July every year. This year's planning began in March with a weekly sub-committee of eight personnel from MMRT working in partnership with MRI teams, Order of Malta, Mayo County Council, the Irish Air Corps, An Garda Síochána, Civil Defence, the local Church Authorities, the Murrisk Development Association and local landowners.

The MMRT spent Friday building the marquee and organising services, food and beverage. Early Saturday morning we airlifted the medical tent and supplies onto the shoulder for the triage centre manned by a team of doctors, paramedics and nurses. This medical unit has saved the lives of two MI casualties in the last two years. By mid-day Saturday we were dealing with the first casualty, a young boy with head injuries.

By late afternoon other teams began arriving and by night fall they had stretchered off a second casualty with head injuries. Before 9 am on Sunday morning, teams on the hill were dealing with two major incidents requiring air evacuations; a 46 year old male with serious upper body

injuries and a male in his 70s who suffered a heart attack and was resuscitated.

The next 10 casualties came in rapid succession suffering mainly from head and lower leg injuries. The last casualty again this year, as is becoming customary, was when the MMRT were finally all off the hill and got a call for a 74 year old male suffering from exhaustion and hypothermia. With most teams well on their way home, PSNI came back on the hill with us to stretcher him off.

The MMRT's PRO contacted many of the national news agencies in advance and did a long piece with RTE Radio 1 and several shorter pieces with local papers and radio stations. In the days leading up to Reek Weekend the PRO sent out several news bites with images of past Reek Sunday rescues and used Facebook and Twitter to boost engagement.

On Reek Sunday, the MMRT's PRO began a rolling Facebook post of latest developments overnight and early morning, sending the link to media contacts, also posting images from the hill sent in from various teams, giving radio and newspaper interviews during the day. The story gathered momentum and by mid afternoon all the major press had online stories and images from the PRO's rolling report. Monday's newspaper editions ran several long pieces with images, and RTE and BBC Northern Ireland ran long radio interviews.

For PRO purposes, planning is everything. For major incidents or events, it works if the PRO has access to the Incident Command Centre and can hear what's going on on the hill but is operationally independent so can funnel images, message and facts via one mouthpiece to the press - that way the message remains strong, clear and accurate.



Facing into 2018, 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:



The casualty requiring assistance is dependant on all these levels for support, regardless of the casualty being 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
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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.

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