



MOUNTAIN RESCUE IRELAND

Annual Report 2019

Saving Lives
in the
Mountains

24 / 7 / 365

mountainrescue.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 2019 and presents the commitment and work of the teams dedicated to responding to those in need.

3

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

M.R.I. Chairman's Report

2019 has seen a continuation of the demand on the volunteer mountain rescue teams throughout the island of Ireland. There continues to be a significant commitment of operational hours with a large increase in the number of rescues completed.

This is a major demand on the dedication and commitment of the volunteers to ensure persons in distress in remote and mountainous environments and I am incredibly grateful for this.

This year also saw the introduction of the National Search and Rescue Plan (NSP). The NSP replaces the previous National SAR Plan and following the devastatingly tragic fatalities at Blackrock and Kilkee. Mountain Rescue Ireland is entirely committed to the successful implementation of the NSP throughout its operations. Mountain Rescue Ireland has represented the mountain rescue teams both during the consultation phase and is attending the newly formed SAR Consultative Committee and the Health and Safety Forum.

Additional regulation from the Charities Regulator and the evolving Charities Governance Code places additional requirements upon Mountain Rescue Ireland and its individual member teams. Mountain Rescue Ireland is actively engaged in these compliances and provides support to its member teams.

The 2018 – 2021 Strategic Plan has made an incredibly beneficial impact upon member teams. The provision of insurance has again been secured despite immense uncertainty from Brexit and a turbulent insurance market. Mountain Rescue Ireland are incredibly grateful to the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport for funding the training and development, along with an annual grant for member teams, with a doubling to over a quarter of a million Euros. We wish to publicly thank the Minister, Mr Shane Ross TD, and his Department for this support, without which would likely remove mountain rescue services in Ireland.

Mountain Rescue Ireland has again engaged with our neighbours in Scottish Mountain Rescue and Mountain Rescue England and Wales. We are represented internationally at the International Commission for Alpine Rescue congress in Zakopane, Poland. Our relationship with the statutory services in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland is vital to deliver mountain rescue and search dog services across the Island. My thanks to An Garda Síochána and the Police Service of Northern Ireland, National Ambulance Service, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Irish Coast Guard and Her Majesty's Coast Guard.

A number of projects are ongoing, including the SARCALL and Peer Review projects. These will ensure that the provision of mountain rescue service is the best it can be. Mountain Rescue Ireland is incredibly grateful the huge number of donations received from members of the public. This support is absolutely vital to ensure the ongoing continuation of mountain rescue in Ireland.

Mountain Rescue Ireland and its member teams are absolutely passionate and are dependent upon the selfless commitment shown by the volunteers and their friends and families. On behalf of the Board I wish to extend my personal thanks to these incredible volunteers. I have been overwhelmed by the professionalism I have seen during my first year as Chairperson of Mountain Rescue Ireland.

Jonathan Shields
chairman@mountainrescue.ie



Police Service of Northern Ireland

I wish on behalf of the PSNI to recognise the commitment of those in our local community who volunteer with the mountain rescue teams and Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) as a whole, not forgetting the support provided by their families and those who work behind the scenes to keep the services running.

Throughout 2019 the teams have continued to provide a professional standard of assistance to the PSNI and the community as a whole. The tragic fatalities in the Mourne highlight that whilst the vast majority of outdoor activities go without incident; there is always the chance that circumstances can change in a moment. It is reassuring to know that we can rely on the expertise of the teams to attend and resolve these incidents at any time of the day or night.

Whilst the teams focus is primarily on the outdoor activities enjoyed in our mountains, the ever increasing numbers of missing persons, as well as the more extreme weather events that are becoming more common continue to provide new challenges to both statutory and voluntary partners.

I look forward to seeing closer working relationships between the PSNI Search & Rescue team and MRI in the upcoming year. Finally I would like to thank the teams associated to MRI and those in SARDA for their continued assistance and commitment throughout 2019 and wish them all the best for 2020.

5

John Clyde
Superintendent.



An Garda Síochána

It is fitting that we recognise the activities and commitment of the members of Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI). Volunteers from our communities, supported by their families, provide a skilled, professional response capacity to those that enjoy experiencing the great outdoors. In activities such as hill walking, rock climbing, mountaineering and mountain biking, injuries and minor emergencies will inevitably occur.

When such incidents are combined with difficult terrain and changing weather conditions they can quickly become very serious and life threatening. Fortunately in Ireland we have Mountain Rescue Teams and Search and Rescue Dog Teams that provide their services on a 24hr basis so that such incidents can be dealt with and the wider community can fully enjoy our natural amenities. I would like to thank MRI and their associated mountain and search dog teams for their continued assistance and commitment and wish you every success in 2020.

Maria Cox
Office of Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing and Major Event Management



Thank you MRI 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 and responsibilities 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. 2019 has been a busy year for the rescue teams, where their services have been extended to assist the increasing participant numbers and associated incidents, in addition to responding to extreme weather events.

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. As teams benefit from improved technical equipment and the introduction of location aps, team effectiveness increases, but Team members continue to 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



Strategic Plan 2018-2021



MRI developed its 3 year strategic plan during 2018 and declared the priority was to deliver to mountain rescue teams the means required for them to continue their mountain rescue mission of saving lives 24/7/365 in Irelands upland and mountainous regions, and to protect and support its members and their teams and volunteers as they save lives in mountainous areas.

M.R.I. will seek to secure funding towards the delivery of this strategic plan. M.R.I. will monitor the delivery of this plan at Board and Committee meetings and present progress to the membership annually at general meetings.

throughout 2019 and your support will be required in 2020. However, none of this would be possible without the volunteers who dedicate themselves to be on call 24/7/365, along with their families and employers who form the foundation upon which this rescue service is built on.

MRI Stakeholders have been critical in allowing MRI volunteers to deliver search and rescue services

To deliver on this, M.R.I. has identified the following strategic goals:

1. Insurance coverage to protect the team operations
2. Capital funding for teams to develop or maintain rescue bases
3. Capital funding for to replace team emergency response vehicles when needed
4. Current funding to maintain and replace rescue equipment
5. Current funding for training to maintain the mountain rescue skillset

Annual Report 2019



- **Training and equipment** costs continue to be a challenge especially in a context of increased rescue activity. MRI is engaged currently with the DTTAS in relation to a review of the grant support systems.
- **Emergency response vehicles**, critical to reaching casualties, can now be funded through grants sourced through the CLAR scheme operated by the DRCD.
- **Rescue bases** are a need for all mountain rescue teams and MRI is assisting teams with sourcing the required support.
- **Insurance** is foundational support for all volunteers and MRI would like to acknowledge the support of Minister Ring and the DRCD.

To deliver on this strategic plan MRI will seek to ensure that all mountain rescue teams are housed in appropriate bases. MRI will work with teams, local authorities, agencies and State funders to deliver on this strategic need.

MRI Company Limited by Guarantee (C.L.G.)

From a humble beginning in 1965, with 6 attendants at the first Irish Mountain Rescue Association meeting in Bryansford Co Down, we have sought to facilitate interaction development, and representation collectively. This effort grew in the subsequent years to the current stage of development where every mountainous location on the island of Ireland has a mountain rescue team ready to volunteer 24/7/365 to any request for emergency assistance.

As the organisation developed and times changed it became appropriate to change the organisational character and incorporate as a charity company limited by guarantee (C.L.G.) in order to give certainty to both internal and external stakeholders in M.R.I. This process was completed during 2018 and recognition is deserved for the legal firm Dechert L.L.P. and The Wheel for supporting us on this journey.

MRI Board of Directors

External Mountaineering Community	Internal Company Secretary	Internal Chair of the Board	Internal Treasurer	External Charity Sector
--	---	--	------------------------------	--------------------------------------

MRI Board of Directors

External: Jane Carney
Internal: Ray Bradfield, Secretary
Internal: Jonathan Shields Chair
Internal: Jerome Hopkins, Treasurer
External: Niall Greene

MRI Executive Committee

Elected Officers

Secretary	Chair	Treasurer	
Public Relations	Medical	Statistics	Peer Review

Project Officers

Aeronautical	Tetra	SARCALL
--------------	-------	---------

Executive Committee Members

Representatives from each of the member mountain rescue teams



Members of MRI (CLG)

Members of the Company



MRI Executive Committee

Secretary - Ray Bradfield
Chair - Jonathan Shields
Treasurer - Jerome Hopkins
Public Relations - Ruth Cunniffe
Medical - Paul Butcher
Statistics - Lorcan O'Neill
Peer Review - Alan Carr
Aeronautical - Diarmaid Scully
Tetra - Kenny Roberts
SARCALL - Donal McNamara

MRI now serves the community through the following company objects:

- to benefit the community by assessing and keeping under review the need for, and the requirements of, mountain rescue services in Ireland;
- to encourage and assist in the formation, training, and development of mountain rescue teams;
- to represent and liaise with community and state services with regard to the achievement of its objectives;
- to propagate information on mountain rescue and safety and take such action as is necessary to promote a wider appreciation of the need for mountain safety;

MRI has adapted the governance standards for a Type C organisation under the Governance Code and is recognised by them as such. As we go forward MRI will demonstrate compliance with charity best practice by incorporating best practice in at the design stage.

MRI enters 2020 with the former association dissolved the new formation dedicated to serving the mountain rescue volunteers throughout the island. We would like to thank Niall Greene and Jane Carney who have volunteered to serve on the board as external directors.

2019 STATISTICS REPORT

Irish mountain rescue teams dealt with 330 incidents in 2019. That's a decrease of 10% on 2018. However, if we ignore the callouts caused by The Beast from The East in 2018 there's been a 10% increase each year for the last 2 years.

The random nature and timing of call outs is evident in the rare happening this year that two teams reported no incidents in their areas in the last quarter of the year. It would be nice to think that it's an indication of efforts by the outdoor community to put safety higher on their list of priorities, or improved technology in the form of mapping apps or longer battery life of mobile phones.

It was commented by one of the teams that more groups are seen with guides now so it's possible that's the reason. It's just for one quarter though so it can't be taken as a trend just yet and it could just be the bad weather.

Technology is certainly a valuable tool for the outdoor community, but I'm reminded of a study presented by a Swedish mountain rescue team at the ICAR (International Commission for Alpine Rescue) gathering in Killarney a few years ago where they looked at the use of airbags in snow avalanche safety. Airbags can inflate if someone is caught in an avalanche and can save lives.

However, the number of avalanche related injuries and fatalities has not decreased significantly with their usage - because when people have an airbag, they are more likely to take bigger risks because they think they are less likely to be injured or killed. Likewise, we have not noticed any decrease in the number of callouts as technology improves and gives people more confidence in their mountain activities.

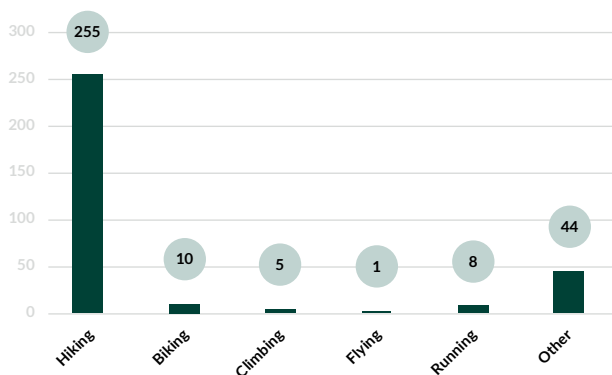
Technology is also important for mountain rescue - low-tech and high-tech. On a callout recently that involved a long stretcher carry (1.5 hours) I noticed how easy (relatively!) it was compared to a few years ago. The big difference was the use of a newer type of stretcher. It has a large wheel with a wide tyre and adjustable handles that protrude at each end with comfortable grips.

It was a long carry in the dark over very rough terrain - often boggy, with those big tufts that make life difficult unless you're on stilts, and a river crossing at the end. It involved lots of humping the wheel over those tufts, but the wide wheel and end handles made the task a lot easier than before.

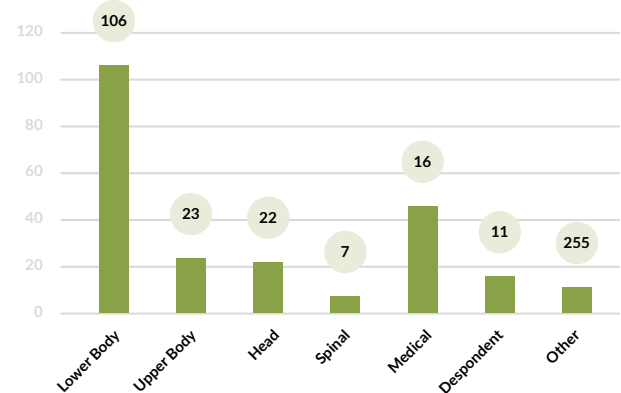
The trend of short callouts is continuing, helped by hi-tech, especially smartphone locating apps like Sarloc. This is changing the dynamic of mountain rescue teams, especially ones that cover large areas. If team members must travel long distances, then the callout is often stood down before they reach the rendezvous point.

This year I asked teams if they noticed any trends in their areas. The answers varied from "nothing of note" to "more tourists and adventure races" to "more serious injuries". With the promotion of Ireland as a clean green tourist destination an increase in foreign tourists could be expected, especially given the promotion of the Wild Atlantic Way. We started recording the number of foreign tourists this year so if there is a trend there, we should be able to see it in future.

Activities of Casualties 2019



Nature of Injuries 2019



249
DAY TIME

330

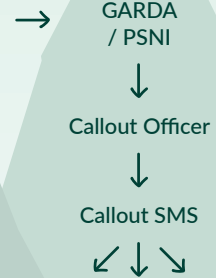
81
NIGHT TIME

TOTAL INCIDENTS

61
HELICOPTER TASKINGS

14,444
PERSON HOURS

999



MOBILE BASE

HELP!

MOUNTAIN RESCUE BASE

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

76
LOST

38
MISSING

144
MINOR INJURIES

44
SERIOUS INJURIES

21
TOTAL NO. FATALITIES

115
SEARCHES

55
FOREIGN TOURISTS

21
OTHER*



donate today
www.mountainrescue.ie/donate

Saving Lives in the Mountains

CISM - Critical Incident Stress Management

In February 2020, 21 representatives from mountain rescue Ireland headed off to Carlow to complete a 5-day CISM course. Teams represented on the course were from Dublin/ Wicklow, Glen of Imaal, SARDA, SEMRA, Mayo, North West and Galway.

The course was conducted in Carlow IT under the instructions of Sharon Gallagher and Ollie Barbour. For all 21 participants we were now students of Carlow IT and discussion quickly came on the first morning to student discounts and where we could go out. While being back in college was a new experience for most of us, we managed to settle into student life pretty quickly, lots of coffee breaks! We were quickly brought back to reality when a 3000-word assignment was put on the agenda. The course was divided over 2 sessions, 2 days one week and 3 the following week.

The course content was delivered through typical teaching methods of lectures, in-class discussions, case studies and group exercises. The course aims to provide participants with an awareness of the impact of critical incident stress.

The term, critical incident stress was developed in the mid 1970's to describe an expected and typical response of normal, psychologically healthy people after an exposure to a critical incident. CISM is a comprehensive, integrated, systematic and multi-component of crisis intervention techniques. There is no single intervention used as a stand-alone technique. This course gave participants the most common tools to us in a CISM program and offered practical experience with group exercises to practice them.

As with the nature of any Mountain rescue team, at times the teams must deal with critical incidents and having completed this course it allows the CISM trained personnel to assist members of the team in a peer to peer fashion as required.





Facing into 2020, 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
Mountains**

24 / 7 / 365

www.mountainrescue.ie

North West Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Graeme Stanbridge
Team Leader: Keith Thompson
Website: www.nwmrt.org



28
CALLOUTS

Annual Report 2019

In 2019 the team was called out on 28 occasions, a reduction of 46% from the previous year. This was mainly due to milder winter conditions and less support to the Ambulance Service to transport patients and medical staff. For the third year in a row at least 50% of incidents have been in County Antrim and this reflects the size of population in the area that includes much of Belfast.

One of our most notable call outs was in May when 19 members responded to a mountain biker in Ballypatrick Forest, who had sustained a leg injury. Contact was made with the casualty by phone who described their leg as 'twisted around the wrong way' before they passed out. The casualty sent photos of their injury and the incident was escalated with the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service being tasked. On arrival the paramedics had already prepared the casualty for evacuation and between the team and Coastguard a rig was set to lower the stretcher on a slippery slope before carrying the casualty to an awaiting ambulance.

In our extended charitable purpose of educating the public on hazards in mountains and offer practical advice to reduce risks, we conducted twenty-two events for community groups. Most notable was the annual Santa visit to the South West Acute Hospital where we always receive a great welcome from the children. At the opening of the new Scout Hut at Claddagh Glen we took an opportunity to rope in the visiting Prince Edward to help with our rigging activities which he found interesting.

The number of members reduced in the reporting year and recruitment will require investment soon to ensure we can maintain our readiness and capability over an operational area of over twelve thousand square kilometres. New members have demonstrated great commitment, and several have taken up committee positions as fundraising and communications officers.

Investment in training continues and there is a concerted effort to broaden our skills to dovetail with

other voluntary and professional teams so the casualty experiences a seamless rescue. The latter part of the reporting year saw much time spent planning a five-year strategy to acquire better assets and improve standards. Paul Kellagher has been leading this project and work continues with the aim of launching the strategy at our AGM in April 2020.

Fundraising has yet again intensified in preparation for the five-year strategy. The Broughshane 5K & 10K run in August remains our largest annual fundraiser and we replicated the event at Colebrooke Estate attracting over 140 runners for the inaugural event. Our thanks to Viscount Brookeborough who gave us free range of the estate and encouraged us to develop additional and more challenging events in 2020.

Our largest purchases were new first aid bags with contents, and a drone. The drone will greatly aid large scale searches by locating casualties more quickly and assist reducing risks to members when tasked to search cliff faces and steep ground.

2020 marks the 40th anniversary of the North West Mountain Rescue Team and we hope to mark the event with notable legacies that will assist in sustaining the team into the future.



12



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

Mourne Mountain Rescue Team

43
CALLOUTS



The Mourne Mountain Rescue Team had a busy 2019 with 43 response calls, amounting to 1829 man hours. Ongoing development, training and fundraising activities also occupied a great deal of volunteer time during the course of the year.

The range of incidents and injuries the team dealt with were predominately medical incidents and trauma injuries which unfortunately included 3 fatalities.

Searches for those missing or lost also featured, as did providing assistance to health service staff to access patients in remote locations in extreme weather. This involved collaborative working with a variety of other services including PSNI, NIAS, UK and Irish Coastguard, An Garda Síochána, local health trusts, the NI HEMS service, Dublin Wicklow MRT and the PSNI SAR team.

A core objective for the team in recent years has been the development of a new rescue base in Newcastle Co. Down and very significant progress has been made during 2019 towards realising that goal. Land has now

been acquired and plans drawn, with help from the Lidl supermarket group, and agreements are in place in relation to procurement and construction. The team await full planning approval for the project and hope to see construction in 2020. Fundraising to underpin this development will be a key focus for MMRT in 2020. Sustaining and building capacity through training has, as ever, been a central feature of the team's activities.

In addition to regular team training, team members completed Casualty Care Examinations, and key members refreshed WEMSI Physician and EMT qualifications. A number of trainee members completed assessment to progress to full team member status.

All in all, 2019 was both challenging and rewarding for the Mourne Mountain Rescue Team. Reflecting on the solid performance of the team in meeting those challenges provides confidence and encouragement and the team look forward to continuing to serve the community who live, work and take their leisure in the Mourne area and beyond.

Annual Report 2019

13



Dublin & Wicklow Mountain Rescue

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



101
CALLOUTS

Annual Report 2019

The Dublin and Wicklow Mountain Rescue Team (DWMRT) consists of 54 rescue team members as well as associate and honorary members. In 2019 an additional 7 probationary recruits continued their training programme. 2019 was another busy year for callouts. The more notable callouts were characterised as mid-week, overnight operations and/or involving substantial search management.

We are constantly upskilling and developing our capabilities. Our training programme this year included sessions in the Scottish Highlands, on Mweelrea in Mayo and in the Cooley Mountains in Louth. 13 team members qualified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) during 2019 after completing a training programme under the auspices of The Order of Malta. The standard of medical care the team, a PHECC licenced Clinical Practice Guideline provider, will be able to provide will be greatly enhanced by the addition of 13 EMT level practitioners. We are also building our search dog capability with the addition of a qualified dog and handler this year and we have a number of candidates in training.

We would like to express our gratitude for all of the support our team received during 2019. Without the

support we receive from friends, family, clubs, individuals, businesses, community funds, state agencies and participants and volunteers at our fundraising events, the team would not be able to provide the service we do provide.

DWMRT were chosen as one of two Intel Ireland signature charities for 2019. Employee fundraising and Intel matching funds resulted in a donation of €36,000 to the team. This substantial donation will be a huge help in our developing a rescue base. We would like to thank Intel Ireland, their employees and Catherine Hallahan, without whom this fantastic partnership would not have been possible.

DWMRT has three main fundraising events of our own which are all hill based and provide significant training opportunities. The Art O'Neill Challenge is a long distance ultra-marathon or trek in January. In March we host Walk the Line in the Dublin Mountains. Then in November we host Run the Line, an accessible hill-running event which is sells out every year. We would love to meet you at one of these events in 2020, as we move closer to building a permanent rescue base!

14





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

Glen of Imaal Mountain Rescue

96
 CALLOUTS



The Glen Team equalled 2019 as its second busiest year in its history with 96 callouts. These callouts have included a significant number of the more challenging shouts, such as prolonged searches, technical rescues and the usual lower leg injuries. As with recent years there has also been a notable increase in the speed of callouts thanks mainly to the use of SARLOC.

The team welcomed a new intake of 8 probationary members in 2019 who were immediately put through an accelerated training programme by our Training officer Chris England.

15

The team undertook winter training in the Julian Alps of Slovenia where snow was guaranteed. We also took the opportunity to train with a local Slovenian Mountain Rescue team in Tržič while we were there.

The committee and members of Glen of Imaal Red Cross Mountain Rescue Team would like to thank those in our Sister team-Dublin Wicklow, our colleagues in MRI, An Garda Síochána, Coast Guard, Defence Forces, National Ambulance Service with a long list of other statutory and voluntary services with whom we cooperate in serving the public.

The Team represented Mountain Rescue during the visit of HRH the Prince of Wales to Glendalough, the home to most of our callouts in 2019.

We would like to say a particular thanks to the families of Mountain Rescue and emergency services personnel for their kindness and support throughout the year.

Our major fundraising event - The Moonlight Challenge, was another success, this time run from our base in Laragh to mark its 10 year anniversary.



Annual Report 2019

South Eastern Mountain Rescue Association

Team Chair: Michael Power
Team Leader: Liam McCabe
Website: www.semra.ie



35
CALLOUTS

Remembrance

South Eastern Mountain Rescue is a team of 53 people (36 men and 17 women). Recruitment normally happens every two years, the last recruitment started in 2017 and in the summer of 2018, 10 new members were added to the team.

One significant change to the team numbers came about in November 2019. Jimmy Barry retired from SEMRA after more than 20 years service. Jimmy is well known in Mountain Rescue circles all over Ireland for his story telling, his love of the outdoors, his skill with a camera and his ability to rescue people before they knew they needed it. While we are extremely sad to see him leave SEMRA, he certainly hasn't left the people or the Galtees.

Call Outs

During 2019, SEMRA attended various Emergency Services Open Days. These are a great opportunity for the public to meet us and see what we do but they are also invaluable in allowing us to meet with other emergency service providers and agencies.

On Friday 19th April, just a week after attending the first Emergency Services open day for 2019, SEMRA were tasked to search for an elderly woman with dementia who had gone missing while on retreat at Glenstall Abbey.

The search began late on Friday night and carried on into the next day when she was found alive and none the worse for her adventure. SEMRA co-ordinated the search and was joined the Coast Guard, SARDA, Nenagh Ormond Search, Irish Search Dogs, Limerick Land Search, Civil Defence, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Red Cross-East Limerick. Each agency brings its own expertise and specialist equipment, for example the Coast Guard ATV was made use of to quickly search forest tracks.

Managing a search is a difficult task, managing a search and setting search areas to best suit the various agencies skills is even more difficult. It is well worth attending the emergency services open days, the other agencies you meet with may very well be joining you on the next big search.

Training

Training classes included for example:

- re-certifying all members under PHECC
- search management skills in the Blackstairs
- training with R117
- heights training
- Winter training in Poland with TORP Mountain Rescue Team

Grants

SEMRA undertook 2 major projects in 2019 that required grant funding. The first project undertaken was to extend our base building. The SEMRA base is basically a vehicle and equipment store which is ideal for that purpose. However, proper office/classroom space and proper kitchen & bathroom facilities are badly needed. Thankfully our application for Leader funding was approved and works to extend the base got underway in Autumn 2019 and should be completed in the Q1 of 2020. It will be really good to have a proper space for future training and meetings without having to move all the vehicles out of the way first and wear all our hill gear inside for warmth!

The second project undertaken was to replace "Victor" our mobile base vehicle. Our CLAR funding application was approved thanks to a lot of hard work by sub-committee of team members. A custom fitted vehicle with the specifications designed by SEMRA members has been ordered and should be delivered in early 2020.



Team Chair: Helen Mhic Chonmara
Team Leader: Gerry Tobin
Website: www.sardaireland.com

Search and Rescue Dog Association

30
CALLOUTS



17

The Search and Rescue Dog Association (SARDA Ireland) is a national voluntary SAR organization specialised in the training and deployment of search and rescue dogs. Our dog teams, which consist of the handler and their dog, are tasked to search for injured or missing persons anywhere in Ireland and are effective in mountains, woodlands, rural and urban areas, waterways and seashore.

Traditionally, all our dogs have been graded to 'mountain rescue search dog' standard. This type of air-scenting dog works off lead and can be used to search large areas very quickly and effectively. We currently have four qualified mountain rescue search dog teams including Jarlath Folan (also a member of GMRT) and Syd from the 2019 cohort. We expect to have an additional two to three dog teams on our callout list after our next assessments in January 2020.

In 2019, SARDA launched a programme to train trailing search dogs. Trailing dogs are 'scent-specific' and need a scent article belonging to the missing person. These dogs work on a long lead and are trained to follow just the specific scent of the missing person. The trailing programme is being developed with the support of the NSARDA, the umbrella group which connects SARDA Ireland to its network of eleven sister teams in the UK.

This year, the Dara Fitzpatrick Memorial Run (DFrun) chose SARDA as one of their charity partners. The proceeds of the DFRun will be used to host an international SAR trailing dog conference in Waterford in 2020. This conference will be the first of its kind in Europe and will bring together trailing dog handlers from Ireland, the UK, Norway and mainland Europe. Our qualified dog teams responded to over 30 callouts in 2019. Many of these searches were conducted alongside other agencies such as An Garda Síochána, Irish Coast Guard, Civil Defence, National Ambulance Service and other Mountain Rescue teams.

In 2019 the CLÁR programme provided targeted funding to mountain rescue teams to procure vehicles or other essential equipment. We were able to purchase a much-needed 4x4 vehicle (Ford Ranger) for the team. Our sincere thanks to the Department of Rural and Community Development for their support with this.

Last May SARDA were delighted to give a talk on the nature and application of SARDA dogs to over 200 trainees at the Garda College in Templemore. This was a joint event where SEMRA also gave a talk on mountain rescue operations. Further, SARDA volunteers took part in a range of open days at garda stations in many locations around the country including Cork, Waterford, Dublin, Wicklow, Clare and Limerick.

We are happy to note that there has been increased interest from the public to become involved with SARDA Ireland. Many new people have started to volunteer as 'dogsbodies' (those who hide on the hills for our dog teams) and to assist with fundraising.

We thank all those who assisted SARDA in 2019 and we look ahead to 2020 with a growing team of committed members. To find out more about training an air scenting or trailing dog with SARDA, please contact assistant-training@sardaireland.com for more information.



Galway Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Dermot Hughes
Team Leader: Rory Sherlock
Website: www.gmrt.ie



21
CALLOUTS

Galway Mountain Rescue Team provides rescue services in remote and inaccessible areas of counties Galway and Clare. With a core strength of around 30-35 operational members, the team is currently recruiting new Aspirant Members to begin training in January 2020. 6 Aspirant Members have recently been upgraded to Full Member after successful completion of the team training programme.

Galway MRT are proud to announce that the first annual "Howl at the Moon" fundraiser event, held in Galway Wind Farm with the support of SSE and Coillte was a great success.

Callouts

Galway MRT had a total of 21 callouts in 2019 – the highest number on record, with callouts every month except for August and December. This has included 3 callouts to the Burren, Co. Clare – a rarity in previous years, on top of the usual callouts to popular Connemara tourist attractions such as Diamond Hill, Derryclare and the Western Way.

Galway MRT have been happy to work very closely with Mayo MRT on a number of callouts this year, further strengthening our close working relationship. Of note, a challenging callout near Maumtrasna in September has

highlighted a need for water awareness preparation and equipment. Galway MRT adopted SARCALL this year also and has successfully used it on callouts and training.

Training

This has been a busy year for Galway MRT in terms of training. In addition to inter-agency training with SARDA, the Irish Coast Guard, the Irish Defence Forces and other agencies, the team has taken part in MRI organised training such as the rigging course in October.

External training undertaken by team members has been varied including: Severe Weather Off-Road Driving Training; First Aid training; and the Field Search Skills Course run by the Centre for Search Research.

Grants – CLAR

Galway MRT have used grants awarded this year to fund equipment and training. In particular, HSE Lottery Funding has been used to help support first aid upskilling by funding EFR training for 8 members. Other grant funding has allowed the team to purchase medical equipment, PPE and communications equipment to ensure that members have the tools they need to carry out their role.





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

Mayo Mountain Rescue Team

48
CALLOUTS



19

2019 was a historic year for Mayo Mountain Rescue Team and saw the Team transfer from an Association to Mayo Mountain Rescue Team Company Limited by Guarantee (CLG). This involved a huge amount of administrative work on the part of our committee members to move to MMRT CLG. The largest body of work included writing a Corporate Governance Handbook and Directors Manual. Currently the Team is comprised of 26 active team members and one reserve team member. In November 2019, the team began a new recruitment campaign with successful applicants joining the team in January 2020, with a view to be operationally available six months later.

Callouts

Mayo MRT had another busy year in 2019, while many of our callouts are to Croagh Patrick due to the popularity of this pilgrimage walk, the team has seen more wide-ranging callouts in terms of the locations in Mayo due to the increase in popularity of the outdoors. This has included searches for missing persons, traditionally our searches have been for walkers who have been late down off the mountains in the winter, but now it includes a wide variety of reasons, map errors and changing weather conditions along with assisting An Garda Síochána in missing person searches.

The number of callouts around the Reek Weekend increased this year. Reek Sunday while it was a busy day, it consisted of minor injuries however either side of the weekend saw the team pushed to the limits due to the number of callouts which involved difficult stretcher evacuations from Croagh Patrick. The team required the assistance of our neighbouring colleagues in Sligo Leitrim and Galway Mountain Rescue teams to go on standby a number of times due to the exhaustive nature of some of these callouts in such a short period of time.

Notably 2019 has seen an increase in our team working and assisting alongside Garda Cóna na hÉireann and An Garda Síochána, Order of Malta and other MRI

teams. This was highlighted in two major callouts for our team. The team assisted the Achill Coastguard in one such incident where a person slipped and fell off steep ground on Slievemore on Achill. The casualty sustained life threatening injuries in difficult conditions on the mountain which involved everyone on scene working together in a difficult stretcher evacuation from the steep ground. In addition during a callout in the Maumtrasna's Galway and the Mayo teams combined to carry out a rescue of a group of walkers who had become stuck fast between two spate rivers.

On a poignant note, the team were tasked to a recovery of a person from Mweelrea in September which was a reminder of the fragility of life. For the team, it is the most difficult tasking but one which the team feels privileged to do, to bring a loved one home to their family in such circumstances. The team would like to thank the local coastguard units from Westport and Cleggan for their support on that day in recovering the body of the deceased person and all those involved.

Training

There were 24 evening and four full day training events completed in 2019. This year saw the team as whole moving toward PHECC registration. Almost all our team members have now completed EFR training with the remainder of the team due to complete it in 2020. Other external courses included a PPE course held in Mayo MRT HQ, a party leader course, search skills training, search management courses and the Doolin rigging course.

Grants - CLAR

Mayo MRT received €16,000 this year from the CLÁR grant which went towards providing Personal Protective Equipment to full team members, search equipment and upgrades to our HQ building in Westport. Currently the team is reviewing proposals for equipment for next years CLÁR grant.

Sligo Leitrim Mountain Rescue Team

Team Chair: Christopher Taylor
Team Leader: Iain Mounsey
Website: www.sligoleitrimmrt.ie



13
CALLOUTS

Incidents

During 2019 SLMRT conducted 6 Searches, 6 Rescues and 1 recovery with 495 person hours given. These were a mix of operating with other agencies including other MRTs Garda, Irish Coastguard, RNLI, HSE and Fire Services.

Training

Training this year comprised of 52 sessions covering the following:

- REC 3
- REC 4
- Night Navigation
- PPE Inspection Course
- Joint exercise with RNLI
- Joint Exercises with neighbouring teams
- Communications
- Medical Refreshers
- Rigging Course Doolin
- Party Leader Course

Events

The team also committed to 10 different events 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.

Other assistance has been given to local events based upon the numbers of people involved and the terrain covered, these include the Warriors Run, Sligo Way Ultra, St Patricks day parades in Sligo and Leitrim, a number of education days with various schools, scout groups, local community groups as well as the national exercise of Croagh Patrick.

Fundraising

During the year the team conducted 4 major fundraising events beginning with the Pub Quiz to which we thank the Thomas Connolly's, Sligo for hosting us. This was then

followed soon after by the announcement of funding under the CLAR scheme from the Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht, this gave us funding of €42500 to replace our aging command and control vehicle.

To this the team had to provide an additional 15% from our own funds. We would like to thank the efforts of the Mountain Rescue Ireland and the Department of Culture, Heritage & Gaeltacht as this has made a vast improvement to the teams' resources in being able to provide a professional service to the local community.

The now infamous annual Ben Bulbin Night Walk continued our fundraising efforts with around 200 supporters enjoyed the guided hike to the top Ben before finally hitting the streets of Sligo for our annual street collection.

Members

Currently we have 22 active members with 4 probationers approaching assessment.

Over the course of 2019 team members gave up over 2700hrs of their time to commit to incidents training and fundraising.

Vehicles

SLMRT has 2 Vehicles in use, a 2008 Ford Transit Van (soon to be replaced in 2020), a 2015 VW Rockton 4x4

Team Base

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.



Team Chair: Kevin Maguire
 Team Leader: Garret Wilson
 Website: www.facebook.com/DonegalMRT

Donegal Mountain Rescue Team

17
 CALLOUTS



21

DMRT (Donegal Mountain Rescue Team) provides an emergency response for the remote and upland environment of Donegal. Geographically DMRT covers from the northern tip of Ireland Malin Head to the stunning cliffs of Slieve League, while also taking in the Bluestack Mountain Range, the Derryveagh Mountain Range and all the upland and remote areas in between. DMRT have currently 20 responders and currently have 10 trainees who are training hard to become responders. Currently 17 responders are trained to REC 3 first aid, two are trained to Emergency First Responder Level and one at EMT Level. All team members are trained in (phecc) CFR.

Dmrt had 17 callouts, and the team assisted not just people who live in Donegal but also tourists who came to the county to enjoy all it has to offer. As always, a large amount of the team's time is spent fundraising this year was no different. DMRT held a bucket collection in Donegal Town in June and in Buncrana in August. DMRT also submitted an application to Clar and to the Sports Council. Having not been successful obtaining the Clar funding the team were granted €8800 from the sports

council, from this the team were able to update stretchers and other vital equipment. DMRT held 34 training sessions throughout the year which also included mock callouts a rope rigging course and search management and mountain skills.

DMRT also welcomed the teams from all over the country as this year the team hosted the annual Mountain Rescue Ireland AGM which was held on the 30th and the 31st of March.

On the 28th of September DMRT when through peer review all MR teams go through a peer review process every two year and the team would like to thank the two assessors Gerry Christie and Mick Grant for attending and working with the team.

As we look into the year ahead the big issue still for Dmrt is the fact the team has no permanent base and also funding and we hope that this year we will get the support needed from local County Councillors and our Local Government representatives to secure both of these.



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

Alternatively you can make an online transfer via the details below

AIB Bank, Killorglin, Co Kerry
BIC: AIBKIE2D
IBAN: 43AIBK963634012108043



Saving Lives in the Mountains

24 / 7 / 365



mountainrescue.ie

Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI), Head Office, c/o Irish Sport HQ
National Sports Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, Ireland