

# ROUND OF A PAWS FOR RESCUE DOGS!

DID YOU KNOW THAT AS FAR BACK AS THE 17TH CENTURY DOGS WERE USED TO LOCATE SOLDIERS IN BATTLE? AND OUR CANINE COMRADES CONTINUE TO PLAY AN INVALUABLE ROLE IN SEARCH AND RESCUE OPERATIONS SINCE THEN. THIS YEAR'S MOUNTAIN RESCUE IRELAND CONFERENCE WAS HOSTED BY THE SEARCH AND RESCUE DOGS ASSOCIATION IN CLARE. REPORT BY MARY MULLINS.

**S**ARDA (the Search and Rescue Dogs Association) hosted the 2013 Annual General Meeting and Conference for Mountain Rescue Ireland (MRI) in mid-west seaside village of Doolin, Co. Clare.

In partnership with the local Doolin Cliff Coast Guard unit and Irish Cave Rescue Organisation, SARDA provided a great opportunity for Mountain Rescue Ireland to meet and share experiences and ideas at this year's conference and AGM.

Opening the conference Senator Martin Conway welcomed delegates to his native county of Clare and acknowledged the good work undertaken by Mountain Rescue Ireland.

Dr Jason Van Der Welde, a pre-hospital critical care physician with Medico in Cork, looked at suspension physiology and outlined that a person who hangs motionless in a harness will most likely be unconscious within 10 minutes, adding that this would lead to death. This is due to physiology and means the body will become stressed, leading to syncope and ultimately shock and death.

## PAIN MANAGEMENT

A vast amount of this research was carried out in New York in 2005 and published in the 'European Journal of Emergency Medicine'. The research resulted from investigating the mechanism of death by crucifixion.

It appears the Romans in early times discovered ways to prolong the method of death by crucifixion. From this research it is possible to deduce that if we keep the legs and the upper body moving, when in a harness to limit the motionless time, then the risk of syncope is reduced.

The remainder of his lecture looked at reperfusion injuries. For example, when someone has been trapped and the fluid



Zao and Lily pictured with KMRT members during a joint exercise.

reverts back into the system causing the heart to suffer an ST elevation.

Studies again deduced that if a person becomes trapped a combat tourniquet could be used and once the rescue has been completed and the patient is in a safe medical environment where they are monitored, the tourniquet is released and tightened again after 90 seconds.

Every three minutes the procedure is repeated until the patient becomes stable. Finally, Dr Van Der Welde stressed that no person in need of pain management should be excluded from relief of that pain.

Dr Jason Horan, Consultant in Emergency Medicine and Medical Advisor for Mountain Rescue Ireland, updated members on the work of the MRI's Medical Sub-Committee, which is chaired by Joe O'Gorman (DWMRT).

## MEDICAL INDEMNITY

During 2012 the Medical Sub-Committee secured medical indemnity insurance for MRI members. This policy covers all members of MRI, both north and south, to provide care in the jurisdictions of the Republic of Ireland and the UK.

It progressed with work on the Scope of Practice. It now has an accreditation committee to oversee the medical programme. It has started the MRI medical registrar and completed the first round to establish potential examiners for the wilderness examination process. It has also produced a new patient report form for teams to use.

In order to comply with legislation regarding the administration of medications, it is essential that MRI becomes a PHECC CPG-approved



organisation. This is to enable us to provide appropriate care to our casualties and to protect individual members from prosecution. There is a substantial body of work yet to be completed.

The committee is working towards a national standard for training. The MR EW (Mountain Rescue England & Wales) Cas Care examination will be the final common pathway to ensure training is fit for purpose.

The aim is to provide support for medics on the hill so that they can provide timely and appropriate care within a robust regulatory framework.

MRI now recognises the need to protect its members by allowing them to operate within the scope of current legislation and with appropriate clinical indemnity.

#### NEW SIKORSKY CHOPPER

Jim O'Neill, winchman with the Coast Guard, gave an update on the new S-92, which will have four crew members and the capacity to carry up to eight passengers.

The S-92 has a flying time of four hours and 45 minutes, and a range of 260 miles. It carries a RIPS system – a rotor anti-icing system – which means that it can fly at higher altitudes.

Other new features include dual hoist with 290ft cable, cargo hook, EGPOS, a database of land masses and obstacles which will allow the chopper to fly safely out of areas in fog, and this will certainly be an additional asset to mountain rescue teams. Improved Flir and rotor tip lighting.

An open door ramp at the rear of the vehicle will assist in getting a stretcher on board from the ground. Jim O'Neill indicated that training with the new S-92 will start soon and advised teams to contact the Coast Guard to arrange training.

Brian McMahon, an officer with the Coast Guard's/Cliff Rescue Team in Doolin, shared his experiences during four call-outs and discussed the risk elements that were evident at the time and the constant need for risk assessments when facing into a job.

He also stressed the value of critical incident stress debriefing as all call-outs are local to some areas and cannot happen without a sense of loss.

#### DOGS TO THE RESCUE

The conference ended with an engaging talk by Harold Burrows of SARDA on the



Six qualified SARDA handlers and their dogs (l-r): Dave Geoghegan and Sheeba; Jarlath Folan and Hugo; Caitríona Lucas and Zac (Zac has since retired); Paulina Kaupilla and Kóiru; Catherine Kelly and Lily; and Michael Grant and Bono. (Bono recently died of cancer. He will be missed by the SARDA community and his handler.) (Pic: Allegra Lawlor, Glen of Inisail Mountain Rescue Team)



SARDA handler Helen McNamara watches an area being worked by a dog in the Osher Valley.

history of how dogs came to be used in search and rescue. As far back as the 17th century it is recorded that dogs were used to locate soldiers in battle.

In 1960 Hamish McGuinness began training after he witnessed the use of dogs in Switzerland. Dog handlers are usually members of mountain rescue teams but they can also have backgrounds in other emergency services.

Up to 360 different scents can be found in the human body and a dog is the expert in using his sense of smell to locate each of those smells.

The value of dogs in search and rescue has widely been accepted and over the years, dogs now train in different disciplines; for example, urban search dogs are used to search for bodies in collapsed buildings.

Meanwhile, drowned victim search dogs can sit at the front of a boat and sniff the wind to try to locate a drowned victim. Avalanche dogs indicate a scent in the snow and then there is the mountain rescue dog.

To be a search dog they must have a large sense of play – locating the casualty

is the game of which they never seem to tire. For this reason Labradors, German Sheppard and Spaniels are the best breed for search and rescue operations.

#### 2015 IKAR CONFERENCE BID

Finally, Mountain Rescue Ireland has submitted a bid to hold the 2015 IKAR Conference. IKAR comprises of four committees – terrestrial, avalanche, air and medical. This will be a very large event and it's estimated to host over 600 delegates.

Kenny Roberts, newly-elected chairperson for Mountain Rescue Ireland, said this would be a great opportunity to showcase both Ireland and Mountain Rescue Ireland and has encouraged all members to get involved.

**About the Author:** Mary Mullins, South East Mountain Rescue Association (SEMRA), is a co-opted member of the Medical Sub-Committee of Mountain Rescue Ireland. She has vast experience in implementing the Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) Cas Care Programme in her own SEMRA team.