

2015 Ireland Medal Ceremony

1 MEDAL PARCHMENT TO AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

The 2015 Ireland Medal Ceremony took place on Wednesday 17th June in the Garda College (Ireland's Police Training College) in the presence of senior members of An Garda Síochána, RLSS UK, RLSS IRELAND, and The Lifesaving Foundation. The ceremony was in four parts.

Police Introduction

Gardaí (Irish Police Officers) are often the first trained responders at a drowning situation and whilst there is no legal requirement on police officers to attempt a rescue most humans have a natural inclination to save a life. The fact that around 20 separate drowning rescues are carried out annually by Gardaí is proof of this. Swimming and lifesaving instruction has been provided to garda recruits since the establishment of the force in 1922. In the first half of the 20th century much of the rescue training was provided by the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) in Ireland especially in Dublin as at that time the training depot was in the Phoenix Park. In-service lifesaving training was provided on an ad hoc basis throughout the country mainly based in cities with swimming pools with some officers qualifying as lifesaving teachers and examiners. If one or more officers in a garda station were active lifesavers they encouraged their colleagues to improve their swimming and rescue capabilities. There was always a willingness to learn lifesaving but not always the facilities to do so on an ongoing basis. It was not until the transfer of training to Templemore and the building of a new swimming pool in the college that it was possible to provide swimming instruction and rescue training on a structured basis.

Many garda officers have played leading roles in both Irish Water Safety and the Royal Life Saving Society. Garda Frank Nolan served as chairperson of Irish Water Safety for 25 years. Eamonn Doherty acted as chairperson of the RLSS Ireland Region

continuing in this role as Commissioner when he could have delegated it to a deputy.

An Garda Síochána regularly participates in the National Police Lifesaving Championships with constabularies in the United Kingdom.

The Garda has hosted the event a number of times, at this college and most recently in 2009 at Malahide where we recorded a home win in the mixed team competition. I know that many RLSS members present here today have assisted with this competition and we thank you for this and look forward to future co-operation and successes.

It is always pleasing on a personal and organisational basis to receive awards recognising the outstanding humanitarian achievements of individual officers and of the training they receive. The receipt of the inaugural Ireland Medal in 2004, awarded by the Royal Life Saving Society in Ireland, was significant because it was a public recognition by a world leading drowning prevention and rescue organisation of, in the words of the medal criteria, the exceptional contribution made by An Garda Síochána as a body and of individual officers to the saving of lives from drowning.

Lifesaving Foundation Honorary Chief Executive Officer John Connolly informed those present that his Garda rescue research has established that An Garda Síochána has a long proud history of drowning rescue. The earliest Scott Medal awarded for a swimming rescue was the 11th medal awarded in 1927 to Garda John O'Brien for two drowning rescues at Courtown Harbour Beach.



Presentation of the Ireland Medal Commemorative Parchment to An Garda Síochána. (l to r): John Connolly, Hon. CEO, Lifesaving Foundation; Eddie Duffy, RLSS President; Garda Assistant Commissioner Jack Nolan; Declan Harte, RLSS Ireland; Brendan Donohoe, Lifesaving Foundation.

A total of 32 Scott Medals have been awarded to Gardaí (1922 – 2014) for acts of bravery involving swimming rescues.

An average of 20 Garda swimming rescues are performed by officers annually.

The majority of rescues take place in rivers.

The majority of casualties deliberately entered the water.

The majority of those rescued by Gardaí are young males.

Many casualties were drinking alcohol beforehand.

The majority of rescues take place at night.

Rescues take place all year round.

The majority of casualties were removed from the water alive.

Most casualties do not resist being rescued.

Two or more Gardaí working together were involved in most rescues.



Members of the Doherty family with invited guests and hosts

2 PRESENTATION OF THE COMMEMORATIVE IRELAND MEDAL PARCHMENT TO THE FAMILY OF DECEASED GARDA COMMISSIONER EAMONN DOHERTY

Eamonn Doherty was a native of Buncrana in County Donegal. He joined An Garda Síochána in 1943 where he rose through the ranks, being appointed Garda Commissioner in 1987. In 1964 he was appointed the first Director of Training at the new Garda College in Templemore. On his retirement he represented Ireland on the European Anti Drugs Task Force. He was Patron of The Irish Amateur Boxing Association and chairperson of The Irish Sports Council. He chaired the Irish Marine Gallantry and Meritorious Award body to his death in 2010.

He was appointed Chairperson of The Royal Life Saving Society's Ireland Region in the early 1980's which oversaw the activities of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland RLSS branches at a time of great difficulty in Ireland. He continued in this role into the 1990's retiring when the committee was restructured. He chaired The Review of Air Sea Rescue Services Commission, better known as the Doherty Commission producing the Doherty Report which led to a total restructuring of Ireland's air sea rescue service and the establishment of the Irish Coast Guard service. Air Sea Rescue was removed from military control and given to the Coast Guard.



Irish Coast Guard Director Chris Reynolds

Speaking at the ceremony Irish Coast Guard Director Chris Reynolds stated that "The Doherty Report fundamentally changed search and rescue forever in Ireland. It led to the creation of the modern Coast Guard, to the acquisition of modern, large helicopters that can reach out into the dark Atlantic on the stormiest of nights, to many more lifeboat stations on our west coast. Ireland now has a Coast Guard service that is a mix of full time professional mariners, contracted helicopters and crew and thousands of volunteers; not just Coast Guard but the RNLi and community rescue boats. Although I might seem rather biased I believe that thanks to Eamonn Doherty Ireland now has an coastal and maritime emergency response system that is the envy of our European partners."

3 PRESENTATION OF HONORARY 2015 IRELAND MEDAL AND PARCHMENT TO FORMER RLSS COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY GENERAL JOHN LONG

The 2015 Ireland Medal was presented to former Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth Secretary General John Long in recognition of "a truly exceptional personal contribution to saving lives from drowning worldwide". Retired Australian Chief Justice The Honourable Terence Higgins AO, congratulating John on behalf of all former medal recipients, stated that "there are many heroes of lifesaving but I know of no-one who has contributed more than you".



John Long, 2015 Ireland Medal recipient

Between 1957 and 1991 John Long was a police officer initially in the Suffolk Constabulary and later in the Warwickshire Constabulary, rising to the rank of Chief Superintendent. During 34 years of police service he was responsible for the police lifesaving training in both Suffolk and Warwickshire. He has been a member of the Royal Life Saving Society United Kingdom National Branch (RLSS UK) since 1957 and has held various posts in two different UK Branches. He has been President of the Warwick Life Saving Club since its formation in 1982 and is currently President of The RLSS UK Warwickshire Branch.



Garda Síochána Retired Members Association

He was appointed Secretary General of the Royal Life Saving Commonwealth Society in 1992 tasked with promoting the saving of lives from drowning throughout the British Commonwealth and served in this role with distinction until his retirement in 2010. Following in the steps of Royal Life Saving Society illustrious founder William Henry John travelled the world founding new national lifesaving organisations in many countries including Uganda, Lesotho and India. Although retired from office it is a sign of his status within world lifesaving he is Patron of India's national lifesaving organisation the Rashtriya Lifesaving Society India. In 2012 he received the highest lifesaving honour bestowed in lifesaving when he was presented with the King Edward VII Cup by H M Queen Elizabeth II during a private audience at Windsor Castle.

4 PRESENTATION OF DROWNING AND OTHER LIFESAVING BOOKS TO THE GARDA COLLEGE LIBRARY

The medal ceremony concluded with a number of book presentations to the college library:



Lifesaving Foundation Honorary CEO John Connolly presented a copy of "Drowning" to Garda College Director, Chief Supt. Anne Marie McMahon..



Dr. Patrick Buck PhD presented a number of copies of his book "A field guide for the treatment of drowning, hypothermia & cold water immersion incidents" to Garda College Director, Chief Supt. Anne Marie McMahon.

Lifesaving Foundation Chairperson Brendan Donohoe presented the college with a selection of lifesaving manuals and reference books.



RLSS UK CEO, Di Steeer with John Long (centre) and RLSS Ireland Branch President Eddie Duffy with members of RLSS and Lifesaving Foundation.