

The Lifesaving Foundation is a not-for-profit company registered as a charity in Ireland. Foundation members are involved in many research projects worldwide. The Foundation has published research on suicide by drowning, foreign holiday drownings, and why swimmers drown. It has a project researching self-rescue in common drowning situations called *The I Am Not Drowning Project*. The first part concluded with the publication of a poster explaining how to survive the first minutes of a clothed entry into cold open water. The following are its 2018 projects;

- A Drowning Prevention and Rescue Research Conference
- Awarded the Ireland Medal and drowning prevention Recognition Awards
- Introduced the Lifesaving Foundation Collection of drowning books
- Restructured the Surgeon Admiral Frank Golden Student Scholarship Fund
- Introduced the Garda Commissioner Eamonn Doherty Police Research Project
- Started a research partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology's School of Health Sciences

The Lifesaving Foundation hosted a most successful 8th Drowning Prevention and Rescue Research Conference in Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, between 10th and 13th September. Features of this specialist boutique conference were a single stream of 30 presentations, equal time allocation to discussion after all presentations, and a majority of those attending staying in Glenroyal Hotel. Lifesaving Foundation Chairperson Brendan Donohoe, speaking about Foundation conferences, stated that it is the policy of the charity to promote discussion among experts in a variety of drowning and water safety disciplines. This primary conference aim determines that the numbers attending are limited



Ross Macleod (RNLI Strategic Marketing Manager- Prevention, UK), Dr Shayne Baker OAM (Royal Life Saving Australia & Ireland Medal recipient), Prof Kristine De Martelaer PhD (University of Utrecht, Belgium)

to the total number that can be accommodated in an intimate U shaped room layout, often squeezed together, encouraging them to talk to one another. Many of those attending like this intimate format as it facilitates face-to-face discussion and there is a high repeat attendance. There is a second row of tables for those who wish more room or who just need to recharge their laptops. This year 60 persons participated over the four conference days. Having the majority of participants living in Glenroyal Hotel meant that strangers quickly became acquaintances. Ideas were discussed at breakfast, lunch, dinner, and in the bar at night. Many research partnerships have been formed at Foundation conferences with papers published subsequently. This is what the Foundation aims to achieve with its conferences.



Dr Filip Roelandt PhD (Belgium), Prof Joost Bierens MD, PhD (Netherlands), Dr Eric Tellier MD (France)

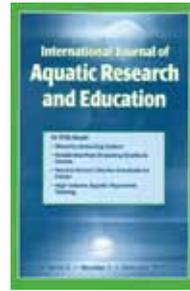
Conference Organiser and Foundation Secretary John Connolly explained that among research questions considered at the 2018 conference were 'Should the wearing of lifejackets in open water by non-swimmers be promoted' (Elizabeth Bennett, University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital, USA), 'Parents false perceptions of their children's safety in open water activities' (Dr. Shayne Baker OAM, Royal Life Saving Australia),

'Can we predict how a person will respond to the Cold Shock response?' (Dr. Martin Barwood PhD, Leeds Trinity University, UK), 'The concept of water competence compared to swimming ability' (Prof Stephen Langendorfer PhD, Editor, International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education, USA) and 'Is there a crisis in the aquatic profession?' (As. Prof Robert Stallman PhD Tanzania & Norway).

The programme contained Information Topics intended to bring important background information topics to the attention of participants. These included *'Bringing home the bodies of those who drown abroad'* (Colin Bell, Founder of the Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust, Northern Ireland); *'A Mother's Story – Founding the charity River and Sea Sense'* (Debbie Turnbull, mother of drowned 15 year old Christopher Turnbull, UK); and *'Respect the Water Campaign – How research and marketing helps RNLI save lives'* (Ross Macleod, RNLI Strategic Marketing Manager, UK).

In a special Surgeon Admiral Frank Golden Fund presentation, Ireland's leading extreme ice and marathon open water swimmer Nuala Moore, spoke on *'Why understanding the challenges of extreme swimming is as important as training for the distance'* expressing her concern at the lack of preparation undertaken by some swimmers in extreme events.

The International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education (IJARE) will publish a special edition containing conference abstracts and a second further edition containing a selection of full papers based on conference presentations.



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## The Garda Commissioner Eamonn Doherty Research Project



The late Garda Commissioner Eamonn Doherty had a long association with drowning prevention. He is best known in Ireland for his Doherty Commission Report which established the Irish Coast Guard Air Sea Rescue service. In his memory a special long-term project has been set up to research police involvement in drowning prevention and rescue worldwide. In a special conference session, chaired by Garda Assistant Commissioner David Sheahan, four police officers spoke about their own drowning experiences and about how drowning deaths are investigated in their own forces. The speakers were Assistant Chief Constable Paul Anderson (Police Scotland), Inspector Rory Hoy (PSNI), Detective Constable Paul Reynolds (Australian Police), and Garda Dave Hearne (multiple drowning rescuer and former member of the Garda Water Unit). The project is supported by the Doherty Family Garda HQ and by the Garda Síochána Retired Members Association.

Assistant Chief Constable Paul Anderson is a former Commonwealth medal winning canoeist. He was instrumental in the development of the first Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) police officers guide to working on or near water. As an international athlete he has competed all over the world and also undertaken expeditions to remote parts of the globe exploring steep rivers in remote locations, requiring specialist expert training and experience in water rescue.

In his conference presentation he stated that *"Any Police Officer could be called upon to assist a member of the public in a water*

*emergency. Many would not think twice about putting their safety second to attempt to save the life of another. The oath we take to protect life and limb can present an officer with difficult moral decisions when faced with a water emergency. The public will always expect the First Responder, normally from the Police Service, to be able to do 'something' to help. However, officers need to be made aware of the inherent dangers of water, safe working practices and correct use of Personal Protective Equipment - before dealing with such eventualities. Every year lives are risked and lost in effecting water based rescues."*

Rory Hoy is the Neighbourhood Inspector for Co. Fermanagh. He has been a police coxswain since 2005. Fermanagh attracts thousands of visitors annually and is very busy during the summer months but it is used all year round. Local police are involved in policing events on and close to water. The District has three boats at its disposal, two of which are kept afloat at jetty facilities at Enniskillen Police Station. Fermanagh & Omagh District is unique within the PSNI as no other District has Police Boats, trained Coxswains & Crew available at all times within their establishment. Outside Fermanagh police boats are operated by the Operational Support Department which services the rest of the organisations boating requirements.

Australian Detective Senior Constable Paul Reynolds grew up in Tasmania, an island located in the southern ocean. Growing up there he was forever in, on, or under the water and had a passing involvement in drowning incidents, such as assisting in the search for survivors from a swamped fishing vessel whilst competing in a Tuna fishing competition. He was the only one of the four



*Front Row: Tosh Lavery (retired former Sergeant-in-Charge of the Garda Water Unit and author of the autobiography Tosh), Ass Commissioner David Sheahan (senior officer with responsibility for the Garda Water Unit representing the Garda Commissioner), Marie Roche (Executive Member - Garda Síochána Retired Members Association), John Connolly (Secretary of The Lifesaving Foundation), Garda David Hearne (multiple swimming rescuer & former member of the Garda Water Unit), Brendan Donohoe (Chairperson of The Lifesaving Foundation)*

*Back Row: Garda Jason Hannon (Garda Water Unit), Dr Shayne Baker OAM (Past-President RLSSA), Garda Chris Hayes (Garda Water Unit), Detective Constable Paul Reynolds (ACT, Australia), Chief Supr (Rtd) John Long (The Lifesaving Foundation & former Secretary General of RLSS Commonwealth), Insp. Rory Hoy (PSNI), Dr Patrick Buck PhD (Lifesaving Foundation & Remote EMT).*

presenting officers who had to demonstrate his ability to swim and have a first aid certificate in order to qualify for police training in Canberra. That done neither subject was included in his induction training programme as a police officer.

Garda Dave Hearne grew up in Fethard On Sea, Co. Wexford. His father was a commercial fisherman and was Area Officer for the local Coast and Cliff Rescue Service which involved him in many sea tragedies around the Hook Peninsula. Once he was old enough Dave assisted his father during these searches. By the time he applied to join the Gardaí he was an Irish Water Safety lifesaving teacher with 4 years' experience as a beach lifeguard on Duncannon Beach, and had an acquaintance with drowning death he would rather not have had. Inspired by the Garda Underwater Unit's search for and recovery of the body of a 10 year old boy he decided he wanted to join the unit. This caused some amusement at his first interview when he informed the panel that he had come to join the underwater unit rather than the Garda. Once he had the required years' police service he joined the unit spending some years there before being transferred to Waterford. He carried out so many swimming rescues in Waterford that his Superintendent 'called me his Golden Retriever'.

### Foundation / WIT Research



The Foundation has established a long-term research relationship with Waterford Institute of Technology's School of Health Sciences. The aim is to undertake joint projects studying all aspects of drowning.

The Lifesaving Foundation / Waterford Institute of Technology research partnership is being supported by the Doherty Research Fund and Professor John Wells, Head of the School of Health Sciences at WIT presented on the preliminary outcomes of a project, involving retired Gardaí and community rescue groups, investigating how drowning deaths impact in local communities. Stressing that it is still early days with the project among the preliminary conclusions outlined by Professor Wells were that the families

of casualties want to be closely involved in searches, something often denied them by official agencies. This denial can be done to remove families from the sometimes gruesome discovery of a body, or of necessity if suicide or homicide is a possibility. Another conclusion was that there is a strong need for closure for both families and communities, for the concept of 'bringing someone home'. For this reason communities continue to search for bodies long after official agencies have withdrawn from a search.

Speaking about the Preliminary Conclusions Lifesaving Foundation member of the research team John Connolly said that none of the above will come as a surprise to police officers or community search and rescue groups. The benefit of this project is that it based on solid research rather than just on an individual's personal opinion which gives it greater value in attempts to improve services to communities in distress.

### The Ireland Medal Ceremony

Speaker of Ireland's Parliament, Dáil Ceann Comhairle Seán O'Fearghail presented the 2017 Ireland Medal to Australian lifesaver Dr. Shayne Baker OAM, D. Phil in recognition of his long exceptional contribution to saving lives from drowning. Shayne's maternal ancestors came from County Clare. Shayne has over 30 years' service as a lifeguard and trainer / educator in the Asia Pacific Region.

During the ceremony public recognition was given to Colin Macdonald OBE, (Chairperson, Royal Lesotho Lifesaving Association), and Wexford Marine Watch who undertake successful voluntary suicide prevention patrols. A special award was made to sisters Helen Irwin Savery and Mary Morrin. Mary rescued her sister Helen from drowning 50 years ago. Helen told



Front Row: Diane Baker, Ceann Comhairle Seán O'Fearghail TD, Dr. Shayne Baker OAM. Back Row: Brendan Donohoe (Chair, Lifesaving Foundation), Richard Andrews (Australian Ambassador), Elaine Edwards (Blizzard Survival), John Connolly (Secretary, Lifesaving Foundation).



Mary Morrin, Ceann Comhairle Seán O'Fearghail, Helen Irwin Savery.

those present that she still has nightmares about the drowning event. Ceann Comhairle O'Fearghail said that it was important for all to understand that it is possible to survive a drowning event unharmed physically and still be inflicted with hidden psychological damage such as nightmares. He congratulated Helen on her making her personal fear public.



**The Ireland Medal Ceremony continued**

Front Row: John Connolly (The Lifesaving Foundation), Eugene Clonan (Deputy Director, Irish Coast Guard), Ceann Comhairle Seán O’Fearghail, Third Officer Paul O’Reilly (Dublin Fire Brigade), Marie Roche (Garda Síochána Retired Members Association)  
 Back Row: Frank Flood (Wexford Marine Watch), The Hon. Richard Andrews (Australian Ambassador to Ireland), Brendan Donohoe (Chairperson of The Lifesaving Foundation), Dr Shayne Baker OAM (Lifesaving Foundation), Donal Hackett (RNLI), Ross Macleod (RNLI), Cllr George Lawlor MCC (Chairperson of Wexford Marine Watch).

**The Lifesaving Foundation Collection**

The Lifesaving Foundation Collection is a collection of books, posters, and other resources in Waterford Institute of Technology’s main library. It is available to all interested in drowning prevention and rescue research. Although open for some weeks the collection was formally launched during the conference by Deputy Librarian with responsibility for Special Collections Kieran Cronin and Professor John Wells head of the School of Health Sciences. The collection can be viewed at this link <http://wit-ie.libguides.com/c.php?g=665155>

The majority of books can be borrowed directly from WIT Library through the Inter Library Loan Scheme



Group present at the launch of the Lifesaving Foundation Collection within Waterford Institute of Technology’s Luke Wadding Library. Deputy Librarian Kieran Cronin is far left.



Garda Commissioner Drew Harris will present the Foundation’s Recognition Parchment to Wexford Marine Watch in Wexford Council Chamber in late November.

**Survey of Opinion**

It was decided to take advantage of our having a wide range of experiences and opinions at the conference. Conference participants were given two different versions of the same ‘poster’ with the message **FLOAT FIRST – SWIM LATER**. One version had the image of a child with a ball while the second version had images of young women in bikinis. This question was then asked of participants **“Is it appropriate to use sexed up leaflets and posters to deliver a water safety message?”**

One reason for using such images is that they may catch the attention of young males who make up the majority of drowning casualties.

Conducted in no way scientific the overwhelming opinion was **“NO”** such images should not be used.

