

# All in a Day's Work

## Andy & Megan Grindrod – Irish Coast Guard Doolin Unit



### PROFILE

Hi my name is Megan Grindrod and this is my husband Andy. We are both volunteers in the Irish Coast Guard Doolin Unit. Andy has been in the unit for six years and I joined in January 2006.

Photos: © John Kelly

both the sea and the shore, including the Burren which can be very hazardous for walkers. We have many cliffs in the area, including the Cliffs of Moher which are 700ft high. The cliffs are beautiful, but can also be dangerous, so make sure you take care if you visit.

### What equipment do you use for your work?

We have two rescue boats, one is a 7.9 m Delta Rib and the other is a 'D'Class inflatable. When we go out on the boat we wear a dry suit, a helmet and most importantly a life jacket. We always take a hand held VHF radio with us and inform Valentia Radio we are going out to sea. We tell them where we are going, how long we expect to be out and how many people are on the boat.

When we are climbing we wear high visibility overalls, safety boots, a climbing helmet, gloves, eye protection and a climbing harness. We carry a radio and whistle for communications. Climbing is Andy's favourite job! The ropes we use are different colours for different jobs. Each rope has to be secured in a certain way. We use one to climb on and one for safety. Only two or three climbers go down and one of these is assigned the task of first aid.

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### A Day in the Life of Megan & Andy

#### How many people work in the Doolin Unit and what do they do?

Each unit has an Area Officer and Deputy Area Officer and they are in charge of the running of the unit and the rescues. There are twenty two volunteers in the Doolin unit at present, most of whom are trained to crew the boats. We could be called out to a rescue at any time day or night. We each have a pager which goes off when we are needed. We work together as a team. There is a job for everyone, either on the boat or at the base doing radio communications, launching the boat or the paper work. Each job no matter how small is important to make the rescue complete.



**Left:** A cliff rescue.  
**Bottom left:** Dressed in dry suits, helmets and lifejackets.  
**Bottom right:** Inside one of the rescue boats.



#### How long do rescues take?

Some rescues last for weeks if we are searching, but most only last a few hours. Each rescue begins with the pager being set off by the Valentia Radio. We all then assemble at the rescue station and are given instructions as to the nature of the incident. Each person is then given a task. Depending on what type of rescue situation it is, each person will take on a different job.

#### How often do you train?

We have a training session every Tuesday night. In the winter we have lectures and practice map reading, first aid etc. Then in the summer we go out more and practice boat handling and climbing. The training is very important as we have a lot to learn and we need to keep ourselves up to date.

#### Is the Doolin Unit a busy one and what area does it cover?

Doolin is one of the busiest units in the country and has on average thirty incidents per year. The area we cover stretches from Galway Bay to Loop Head, County Clare. We cover

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#### Do you enjoy the work?

We both enjoy all aspects of the rescue work. It is a very satisfying job but hard work. We enjoy working with the other team members. It takes up a lot of time but it is nice to know that you are helping people.