

Beachley Lifeboat & Rescue Station

Lifeboats; Land Search; Cliff, Mud, Swift Water and Flood Rescue

What is SARA?

SARA is a volunteer search and rescue charity, with Lifeboat and Rescue Stations along the length of the River Severn. Their members perform rescues on the Usk, Ebbw and Wye as well as the Severn, and from the cliffs and other areas of difficult terrain, and to conduct missing person searches in support of the Police. In 2021 SARA conducted 113 different operations. The team based at Beachley (near Chepstow) often works with teams and boats from other SARA stations as well as other agencies.

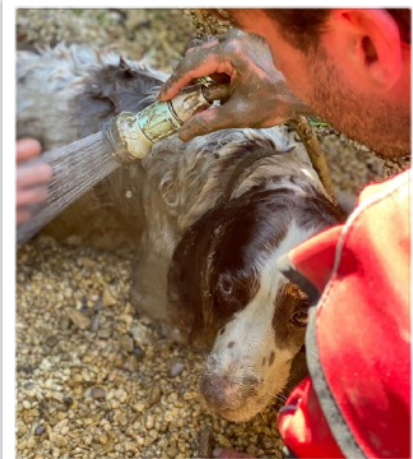
SARA Operations

Most of SARA's work involves search and rescue of people, or their property, but we are sometimes called out for animal rescue as well - and reports of a dog rescue are always hugely popular. In mid-July the SARA Sharpness team was called out to rescue a young dog (a spaniel, no surprise there) who had got himself stuck in mud near Newnham.

A week later, their Facebook post about that callout had been shared almost 100 times and had almost 500 'reactions'!

Later that same day (a Monday) we did go to the aid of a human - we had reports of a person in the water downstream of the M48 Bridge, and SARA Lifeboat 3 was launched onto the outgoing tide. With the Coastguard coordinating a search also involving RNLI Portishead, the Coastguard Rescue Teams from Chepstow and Portishead, and the Coastguard helicopter, we searched an area close to the M4 Second Severn Crossing before being directed to the River Wye as the tide had turned.

As we arrived in the Wye, the Coastguard helicopter located the casualty; they were able to winch him aboard directly and transport him to hospital. We wished both casualties good recoveries!



Our search teams have also been called out regularly over the past few months, including twice for operations supporting our colleagues from Wiltshire Search & Rescue and once to support Longtown Mountain Rescue Team, as well as to tasks across Gloucestershire. A full list of our taskings is maintained on our website at www.sara-rescue.org.uk/callouts



SFRBO Courses

Having crew with the right qualifications for operate a boat in flood water is an essential part of our preparations for winter flooding.

In the last edition we reported on the qualification of new instructors for the 'Swiftwater & Flood Boat Operator' (SFRBO) ticket, and Beachley's Dave Deveney has been busy putting his into practice. In the past few months he has run two courses in the local area, and had now certified (or re-certified) 6 crew as SFRBOs.

Chepstow residents (and Sammy the seal) have been treated to multiple ladder ascents of the old bridge and the cliff at Gloucester Hole, so far without mishap!



Wild Wye SwimRun

At the start of July we held one of our more adventurous fundraising events, the Wild Wye SwimRun. 44 runners ran 13km of beautiful trails in the lower Wye Valley, and mid-way through they swam across the river at high tide. SARA crew provided support and safety cover.

It was hard work, for us and for them, but they seem to have enjoyed it - despite the torrential rain at the finish.



The race raised about £1500 for SARA, so many thanks to everyone who came, as a volunteer or as a competitor! It's not planned for next year as there are no suitable times tides, but perhaps it will return in 2024?

New Chair of Trustees

In May SARA was delighted to announce the election of Keith Beckett CBE as the new Chair of the Board of Trustees, following the retirement of Jim Hewitt at the end of 2021.



Keith is originally from Anglesey where he gained his love of the sea and the mountains. He joined the Royal Navy from school and qualified as an operational submariner and nuclear engineer.

Leaving the Navy in 2018 after 37 years, he now works for an Agency of the MoD involved in all aspects of support for the UK submarine force; Keith is the Technical Director.

Keith brings experience of leading organisations that are growing, and of operating pragmatically within high hazard environments. He has been responsible for large procurement programmes and the associated commercial and financial decision making. Additionally, Keith brings experience of working within Government and of dealing with various regulatory bodies.

He has some additional roles that are voluntary. He is the Head of the Royal Corps of Naval Constructors, a patron of the Holyhead Maritime Museum and has recently retired as a Vice President of the Royal Navy Rugby Union. He became a SARA Trustee in April 2022.



Farewell Martin Brace

It was with great sadness that at the start of July we learned of the passing of our team member, Martin Brace. Martin had been a keen member of SARA for nearly a decade, in that time becoming an operational member of both the land and boat teams at SARA Beachley.

He brought with him a wealth of relevant experience, including from his time in the military and his work in the law. As might be expected, given his profession as a dentist, he excelled at casualty care. He attained the MREW qualification and then led the casualty care training programme at SARA, including taking it online when Covid started. His dry humour, calm influence and leadership will be missed by all that knew him.

A contingent from SARA attended his funeral, as well as many friends and family. Stand down C58, and thank you for your service.



Queen's Jubilee Medals

On 14 July it was the turn of members of the SARA Beachley crew to be awarded the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal as a token of thanks for their service. The medal has been awarded to frontline members of the emergency services, prison service and armed forces who had over 5 years of service on 6 February.

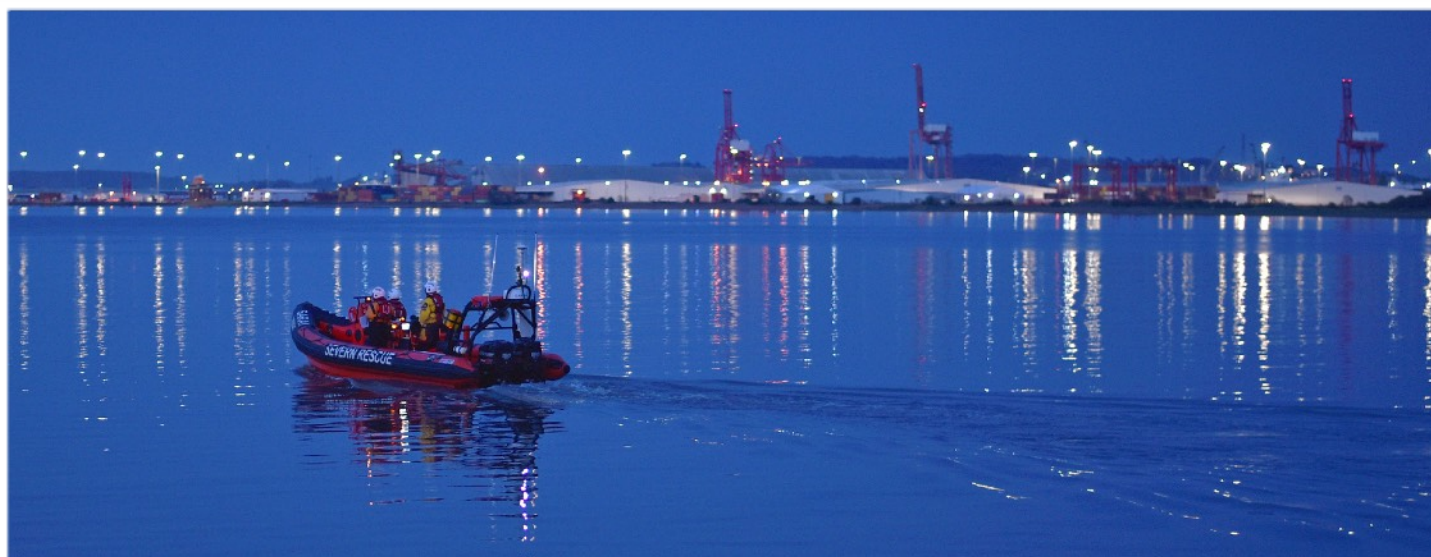
SARA CEO Mark Carwardine made the presentations, including those to our Founding Chair and Life Member Jim Hewitt, and 3 former General Managers of Beachley Station (another one was away on business). Mark, who is himself a member of Beachley Station, has been busy visiting each of the SARA Stations to present medals to the crew at each.



A Monthly Donation?

SARA depends on donations. A small monthly donation would help us immensely.

Just email info@sara-rescue.org.uk to request a standing order form. Please don't forget to tick the 'Gift Aid' box!



SARA Lifeboat 1 on evening training near Portishead, as some of our helms prepare to sit the exam for the 'MCA / RYA Advanced Powerboat Certificate of Competence', required to helm at night



Wedding Bells

Congratulations to SARA Beachley Coxswain Ian Blayney and to SARA's Rope Rescue Manager Andy Torbet, who were both recently married (not to each other)!



#EnjoyWaterSafely

Promoting water safety is an important part of SARA's mission. This year we were again pleased to support the RLSS's Drowning Prevent Week in June. Some of our series of social media posts were shared nationally.



We have also re-started visiting schools - this is Mary (one of our lifeboat crew) teaching children at Castle Park Primary School Caldicot about water safety.

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And Finally...

...Another dog, what else?

This lovely border collie - a qualified search dog from SARDAs (South Wales) - supported us on a search near Cirencester at the end of April. Who wouldn't want to be found by her?



SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association) is a Registered Charity CIO in England & Wales No: 1193634*
Registered Address: The Lifeboat & Rescue Station, Beachley Road, Chepstow NP16 7HH

www.sara-rescue.org.uk

*Charity 505504 prior to 31 Dec 2021

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