

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. Our 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 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

Two of the more dramatic callouts of the year occurred in the last week of October. We were called out to Redbrook shortly after 7pm on the Monday, to support South Wales Fire and Rescue Service. Gloucestershire and Hereford & Worcester Fire Services were also attending with their boats - and police and ambulances from two services each.

A man had been reported as entering the River Wye, and as our first team members arrived a second man was also in the river. As the SARA team was assembling the second man was rescued just below Redbrook by the fire service; we assisted with getting him to the waiting medics.

The Coastguard helicopter then arrived overhead and spotted the first man further downstream. He was rescued into a fire service boat and landed close to Bigsweir Bridge, where he was assessed by the SARA team doctor and taken to an ambulance. Having been in the river in the pitch dark for well over an hour he was lucky to be in a good condition!

We wish both men speedy recoveries.



That Friday morning, SARA Lifeboat 1 'The Jim Hewitt' was called out to two single-crewed yachts at St Pierre Pill, which were hard aground after one had apparently tried to rescue the other. However with the tide by then ebbing there was nothing that could be done to refloat the yachts. One of our SARA coxswains assisted the skippers in setting their anchors ready for them to pull themselves off on the evening's tide if possible. Sadly the next tide was not high enough, and at the time of writing they are having to wait another week!

There have also been several missing person searches in the Forest of Dean and beyond, as well as some less eventful lifeboat launches - as is the usual pattern!

A full list of our callouts is maintained on our website at www.sara-rescue.org.uk/callouts.



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Queen Elizabeth II

Aside from politics, September was of course dominated by the sad passing of the Queen.



When news of her death broke, all training was cancelled across SARA that evening and the flag was flown at half-mast. It was raised again when King Charles' Accession was proclaimed, and subsequently lowered again for the remainder of the Mourning Period.



A number of SARA members had met the Queen over the years. However, none could remember back to when she alighted at the Beachley Slipway in 1958, en route to St Briavels and then on to Speech House.

NILA Launches!

At the end of September we were proud to announce that SARA had joined the new National Independent Lifeboat Association (NILA) as one of the founding members. NILA is a new charity which aims to assist the UK's independent lifeboats and to help ensure the preservation of life on the water.



Members of NILA retain their independence while enjoying benefits including greater representation in Parliament, promotion nationally, and access to working groups where data and best practice are shared. The association also aims to achieve recognition by the UK SAR Operators Group, joining the likes of the RNLI and Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW).

Mark Carwardine (SARA CEO) commented "We are really pleased to have been involved with NILA from its inception and look forward to working with our colleagues from other lifeboat organisations to share best practice and importantly to raise the profile of our sector."

NILA has now launched a website and a public facebook page, at www.nila.org.uk and www.facebook.com/NILAsscUK.

New Lifeboat Crew

Many congratulations to Ali Tomlinson and Tyler Josh Carpenter, who have now completed their training and been accepted as operational SARA Lifeboat Crew. They have been training for the past 11 months, on a programme which has included a wide range of skills, both on the boats and ashore.

They have earned their RYA PB2, VHF, Sea Survival certificates, learned to operate all the electronics on the two Beachley lifeboats, to navigate with and without these electronics, practised rescuing and handling both live and deceased casualties and covered a range of other aspects of lifeboat operations. We wish them well as they start their new volunteer careers as operational lifeboat crew members!



Rescue Runner JetSki

SARA Beachley is trialling the use of a 'Rescue Runner', a type of jet-ski made specifically for rescue by a Swedish company called Safe at Sea,. Examples of this and similar craft are in use across the world, often for use in coastal surf conditions or other rocky areas where access for a conventional boat is difficult or dangerous.

SARA's Rescue Runner was part of the fleet at our Upton Station, which was incorporated into SARA in 2020. The team at Upton had purchased it with a grant back in 2015. It had been intended for flood rescue work, but was rarely deployed at Upton so we are now trialling it at SARA Beachley.

So far we have used it to trial searching in the Severn alongside a lifeboat, for example along the shoreline and into the small pills, and going up the River Wye at low water where small boats may struggle and delay. We've also used it to transport a paramedic to a casualty site, and to rescue a floating casualty.



The bylaws for the River Wye restrict jet-ski use to the river below Chepstow railway bridge and we are working in agreement with Gloucester Harbour Trustees, who make the bylaws.

At the moment the Rescue Runner is on trial at SARA Beachley, and we are continuing to assess whether its potential benefits for us are worthwhile.

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.

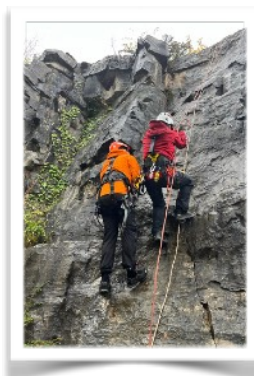
Please don't forget to tick the 'Gift Aid' box!

Rope Rescue Course

The end of September saw five Beachley team members complete their Rescue3 Rope Rescue Operator course, to become fully operational members of the Rope Rescue Team. This will add some extra resilience to the existing rope team to support call-outs on our cliffs and areas of steep ground in the Forest and beyond.

Most of the practical aspects of the course were carried out at Woodcroft Quarry, where it quickly becomes apparent why SARA has a rope rescue team, despite our lack of mountains!

The course participants learnt various rescue techniques including setting up anchor systems, descending and ascending ropes whilst picking off a casualty on the way, various mechanical advantage systems and stretcher/casualty management. Over a period of a few weeks the weather conditions ranged from torrential rain to tropical sun!



As the course progressed all of the participants were surprised at how quickly what had looked like an extremely complicated tangle of ropes at the beginning of the course became a simple and logical rope safety system, and the techniques became second nature.

SARA Beachley was able to carry out this training in-house, as we now have a small number of Rescue3 qualified rope instructors, which saves us not only time, but money!





Incident Management Training

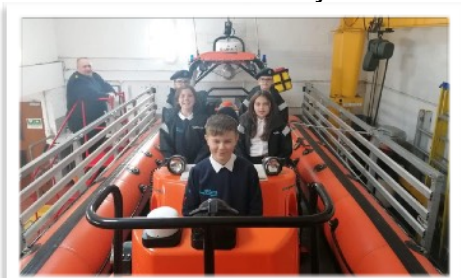
Working well alongside other emergency services is a key factor in successful rescues. We were delighted to see Kev Adcock from Glos Fire & Rescue again in October, for the first of a second set of seminars on effective Incident Command. An important part of that is using the JESIP (Joint Emergency Services interoperability Programme) Framework and other material.



We have also sent some of our more senior members on specific JESIP training run by various Police and Fire Services.

Station Visits

At the start of October we hosted a visit from the Junior Section of the Forest of Dean Sea Cadets. We were able to give them an insight into lifeboat and other search & rescue operations. Hopefully we will see some of them back as trainee crew in a few years!



If your organisation would like to visit our lifeboat and rescue station, please get in touch!

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The Herbert Protocol

At SARA we are often asked to look for someone with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. Our search is so much more effective if the person or their family has completed a **Herbert Protocol Form** about them in recent months.

You can now read all about the form, and download a copy, from our website at:
www.sara-rescue.org.uk/herbert-protocol

And Finally...

As winter approaches we know it's important for us to be prepared. We have been out training in the dark, including in and on the water. Everything becomes harder at night, so it's essential to practise core skills!

If you are heading outdoors this winter, there is some great advice at www.AdventureSmart.uk.

Take a torch - and spare batteries - and stay flexible. There's no shame in changing your plans if the weather or something else changes.

Enjoy the outdoors, safely!



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

info@sara-rescue.org.uk

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