

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, Wye, both Avons and other rivers 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 2023 SARA conducted 107 different operations. The team based at Beachley (near Chepstow) often works with teams and boats from other SARA stations as well as other agencies.

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

SARA Firsts!

On the River Severn on Wednesday 7 February, SARA achieved an important milestone - the first operation of a SARA lifeboat with a female in command. SARA Helm Mary Miller joined the organisation in 2020, with a background in dinghy sailing and rowing, amongst other things. She was promoted to Helm in December, alongside Lee Morris and another lady, Toity Deave. SARA has a number of female lifeboat crew and land search party leaders, but Mary and Toity are the first to be qualified as lifeboat helms - able to command a lifeboat during daylight hours.

During the previous Sunday afternoon, a yacht had run aground on the mud downstream from Thornbury. Two SARA lifeboats were tasked to go to her assistance, but she was stuck fast and her crew were able to walk ashore, under supervision of Chepstow Coastguard. With the tide on Wednesday more than a metre higher than on Monday, she was refloated with Mary's lifeboat standing by to assist if required. SARA Lifeboat 2 from SARA Sharpness then towed the yacht back to safety at Thornbury Sailing Club.



Mary Miller, helming SARA 3



Ollie Pole, at the Wild Wye Swim

SARA achieved another first at the start of February, with Ollie Pole completing his training to become operational lifeboat crew. Having just turned 19, Ollie is one of the youngest lifeboat crew SARA has had. He is the first operational team member to have started volunteering with SARA as part of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme.

Ollie first came to SARA in 2018, whilst working on his DofE Bronze, and helped out with routine maintenance and fundraising. SARA currently has 5 volunteer students helping to Beachley as part of working towards their DofE Awards!



Farewell John and Hugh

Early in January we were saddened to learn of the passing of John Cairns, and then only a few days later we were devastated to learn of the death of Hugh Inwood.

John and his family became part of SARA back in the mid 1990s, when they joined the 'Friends of SARA'. He and his wife Murray helped with fundraising events which were held in the Stourport Marina club house.

When SARA Wyre Forest Station was initially proposed, John came on board and became Chairman of Friends of SARA Wyre Forest. For a time he was Station Chairman for Wyre Forest Station, and he became a Trustee for the charity until the 2023 AGM, by which time he had been made a Life Member of SARA.



John Cairns, always happy fundraising!

Hugh Inwood had been with us for five years and in that time had become the face and voice of SARA Sharpness in local media and radio. He was Deputy General Manager at Sharpness had been involved with many aspects of running the wider organisation as well, and he will be much missed. Stand down Hugh.



Hugh Inwood, at SARA Sharpness Lifeboat Stn

Flooded January!

In January, SARA Flood Teams were deployed to flooded areas of Tewkesbury and Gloucester for several consecutive days.

The volunteers, who are all trained to national standards, carried out numerous evacuations of residents from flooded homes – both people and their pets (4 cats from one house!), and in one case having to first take a translator as the evacuees were refugees from overseas.



They also conducted welfare checks and took in supplies to those who could not leave, working alongside colleagues from Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, social services, parish councils and Gloucestershire County Council to support residents.

A few days later they were invited to meet HRH The Duke of Gloucester when he and his wife visited the flood-hit areas, with the Duke talking to SARA members at two of his stops.



New Land Searchers

By Karthi Suresh, the new C30!

At the start of February, SARA had six new members write their final assignments successfully and join the operational land search team at Beachley. Their assessment day took place on a beautifully sunny June 25th at New Fancy, and whilst that may seem so long ago, the training period did indeed fly by.



During training the members learned a huge amount, ranging from basic navigation (beware some phones may occasionally point to North in a different direction to the compass!) to getting well acquainted with finding (empty) bottles of '19 Crimes' wine on search exercises.

Basic navigation skills were learned or brushed up, and the procedures related to scenes of crime were rigorously revised, as well as the fundamental call out procedure.



Unlike the changes in season over the course of the training period, the encouragement from every member of SARA at Beachley, and beyond, has been constant - the new SAR Technicians would like to thank everyone for their support, especially the instructors for their time and dedication. They are very much looking forward to working with the team at the next callout and aiding with the training of another cohort later this year.

Rope Rescue Instructors

Three team members qualified in February as Rope Rescue Technician (RRT) Instructors with Rescue 3 Europe. This is one of the highest qualifications realistically available to volunteers, with this being the conclusion of a series of seven weekends (some of them 3-dayers) of qualification training since they did their own RRT courses.



An RRT is required to run a rope rescue operation, so it's a key qualification. Hence the would-be instructors were very much put through their paces in the classroom and in the field, at one point rescuing a Ruth Lee Ltd dummy from a notionally burning tower.

The course was delivered locally by ISAR3 and included colleagues from Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and NE Wales Search and Rescue. It used our station at Beachley, Lydney Fire Station and Woodcroft Quarry.



It even included the first use of a working model tripod for use at a cliff top. It has a Working Load Limit of 0.5kg, instead of 400kg like a real one (after all it is made of plastic pipe and string) but it's strong enough for a classroom lesson.

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The Next Launch Tractor

Our wonderful Beachley Launch Tractor (BLT) is nearing the end of its days, so we are fundraising for a replacement. A new vehicle will cost £30,000 – but without it we cannot continue to do our work helping to keep people safe on the Severn Estuary and River Wye.

The BLT 500 Club is a fun and easy way to support our fundraising. It is a monthly draw with a huge £500 prize. It will be limited to 500 entries each costing £5/month – participants are welcome to have as many entries as they like. Other prizes will be added in on an occasional basis and will include VIP Lifeboat trips. It will start once we have 150 entries.

If you are interested please email:
mary.miller@sara-rescue.org.uk

Amazing Chris!

SARA supporter Chris Greenaway (who works as a Farm Manager) is undertaking 3 amazing endurance events this spring to raise money for the replacement launch tractor.

First, in May, is the Worcester Marathon, followed, just a week later, by the 3 peaks Challenge and then in June by the 100km Cotswold Ultra Challenge. Chris is doing all of this in memory of his sister-in-law, Emily, who tragically took her own life and was found by SARA. All of us at SARA Beachley are honoured and humbled that he has chosen to fundraise for us in this way.



Chris is already training hard and would really appreciate your support! www.justgiving.com/page/chris-greenaway-1706388487974

Bingo and Dance!

Two fantastic fundraising events marked the start of February. On Sat 3 Feb, Arête Dance Academy put on not one but two Dance Shows, with a raffle being held in aid of SARA. They raised a total of £249! Thank you to everyone who purchased raffle tickets and a special thank you to all the people and local businesses who donated raffle prizes!



Then on Mon 5 Feb, Netherend Inn hosted a Bingo night in support of the launch tractor appeal. It was a fantastic evening supported by lots of lovely local people. Everyone had a good time and raised a magnificent £680 towards the replacement of the launch tractor.

A massive thank you to the Netherend Inn, Woolaston and to everyone who came along, from all of us at SARA Beachley.



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 (Severn Area Rescue Association) is a Registered Charity CIO in England & Wales No: 1193634
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