

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. We also conduct missing person searches in support of the Police. Each year SARA conducts over 100 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 operations is maintained on our website at www.sara-rescue.org.uk/callouts.

Operational Call-Outs

Monday 28 Oct was one of those days when we get two lifeboat shouts in one day. The first was to a motor cruiser with engine failure. She was taken under tow by SARA Lifeboat 1 and towed back to Beachley, where it was handed over to Chepstow Coastguard. A couple of hours later the Coastguard paged again, to ask us to support Gwent Police with a vulnerable person on the M48 Severn Bridge. We stood by, ready to launch, until stood down by the police. Several volunteers attended both jobs.

The month had started with a callout to Tintern, to 'someone stuck on rocks opposite Tintern Abbey'. Actually, an elderly man was opposite Tintern Old Station Tintern, having been pulled out of the River Wye by some walkers, but he was trapped below dense vegetation. A member of the SARA team made their way down to the casualty through the steep woods. Meanwhile, other SARA personnel launched our small boat Rescue 5 at Brockweir. We helped to get the casualty transported safely across the river to the field on a fire sled, and from there he was evacuated by Welsh Air Ambulance.

These were just a couple of our recent callouts, with the land search team deploying to Gloucester several times and the lifeboats repeatedly in action. Even our team attendance at Chepstow's Remembrance Parade became eventful this year, when an spectator collapsed towards the end of the parade and our Remote Rescue Medical Technicians (the new term for 'Casualty Carers') helped to look after him until he could be taken to hospital. We had been providing vehicles to assist the Council with road closures, which meant we could bring our emergency equipment to Chepstow High Street very quickly!



A smart line-up of vehicles of our Land Search Team, at a callout in Brockworth, near Gloucester.

L to R: Mobile 3 from SARA Tewkesbury, the new ICU (see inside), Mobile 2 from Beachley, Mobile 5 from SARA Cotswolds (Cirencester) and Mobile 14 from SARA Upton.



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New Lifeboat Crew

Welcome aboard Barry Saunders, Barry Welch, Warren Lester and Jordan Andrews. In November they qualified as Lifeboat Crew, following a 12-month training programme. They had already been helping on callouts as 'Shore Crew', and it was not long before the Barrys were on their first callout in the dark!



Congratulations also to...

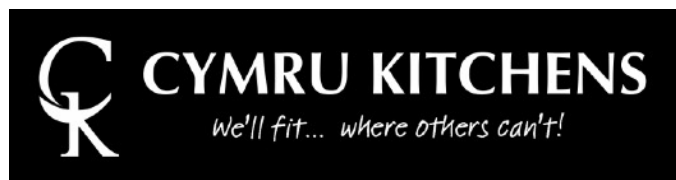
We've had a busy Autumn with other qualification courses too. In October we hosted a Mountain Rescue Search Management Course at Beachley over a 3-day weekend. That provided 8 new Search Controllers for SARA, 3 of whom are from Beachley.

3 members of Beachley (2 of them doctors) and 2 from other stations completed a Rope Rescue Operators course in October. We now probably have more doctors in our technical rescue team than any other team in the country (7 so far)!

We've also run two 4x4 courses which saw 6 team members qualified. One group went to the Mendips, and got the vehicles massively muddy at West Harptree, and then another group went to the Brecon Beacons to conquer big gravel mountains at Trefil Quarry.

And one of our land search team members, and his dog, became a qualified search and rescue dog team!. Mike Jouxson and Buddy have been in intensive training with SARDA South Wales for several years, and in November they passed a weekend of assessments in the Brecon Beacons.

Many thanks to all the instructors concerned - they are all volunteers too!



New ICU

In early September, our new Incident Control Unit (ICU) vehicle went live! Almost a year in the making, it replaces the old vehicle which we retired at the start of 2022, and will support our missing person search operations across Gloucestershire and beyond.

It is equipped with two VHF radios, two computers to provide mapping and to track the locations of our search parties in real time, and a printer to create maps in the field. It has mobile broadband internet connectivity, essential for viewing satellite imagery and maintaining communications in remote areas.



At the same time it provides plenty of space for search managers to plan and manage an operation, and for search parties to be briefed. A robust enclosed awning provides an extra space for briefings.

Christian Harvey, from '**Explore the Scenic Route**' in Cinderford, did an amazing job with the van lining and cabinetry. Then the SARA team of Kathy Donaldson, Steve Trott, Drew Moore and Ben Gleed did wonders to fit out all the electrics and electronics, and all just under budget too.

We held a small ceremony at Beachley, attended by donors and other important stakeholders. Executive Land Search Manager John Dutton thanked everyone involved, and then cut the ribbon to declare it Operational!

The ICU will be housed at Gloucester South Fire Station, which is very central to our operations across Gloucestershire. We are grateful to Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service (GFRS) for enabling this.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this project, which should make a huge difference to our operational effectiveness.

Flooding in Cardiff

Our Swiftwater Rescue Team has been busy in Cardiff, but only on training exercises! There have been three opportunities to use the fantastic facilities at Cardiff White Water during October and November.

First off, on 14 Oct, the SW England Rescue Association (SWERA) organised a session during the afternoon and evening, allowing team members to practise skills in both light and dark, with the flood lights off.



Practising Rescue from a Car, in the Dark

Then there were two repeat sessions run by Avon & Somerset Police, set up as a series of flood rescue scenarios. Flood teams made up of members from lots of different agencies had to work together, to access and rescue people from houses and flooded cars, with casualties in them and sitting on the roofs of both.

There were pressured aspects, with lots of the casualties' medical conditions deteriorating, and the dummies suddenly needing CPR. Towards the end there was even a 'crashing plane' and the parachuting pilot ended up hanging from a bridge over the water and needing rescuing (before having a cardiac arrest, of course!).

Huge thanks to Wiltshire Search & Rescue, and Avon & Somerset Police for arranging these!

Carnage in Moreton

In late September there was a terrorist outrage at Moreton-in-Marsh Shopping Centre. Two of our advanced first aiders were in the area, and offered support and help to the emergency services, triaging and assessing multiple casualties who had been run over, stabbed or shot by the terrorists.



Thankfully this too was a multi-agency training exercise organised by GFRS at the Fire Service Training College. As well as seeing how well our by-stander support was utilised, other SARA team members shadowed Fire Service incident commanders to learn how the response to these complex and confusing incidents works.

This was a fantastic learning experience. Many thanks to GFRS for inviting us to participate.

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 3 at Chapel Rock, just off Beachley



Fundraising thanks!

We have had a great autumn of fundraising. On Fri 27 Sept, we held a Golf Day at the prestigious St Pierre Old Course fundraising for the new Launch Tractor and its garage, and raised over £6000. The deposit for the new tractor has now been paid!



We've had really successful fundraising stands at Chepstow Tesco and Chepstow Garden Centre, a first 'Adventure Talks' evening with Alan Hinks and Mark Powell, and we've supported the Devauden Fireworks and the off-road 'Wheelchair Ramble' for the Wye Valley National Landscape Team.



We have also been supported by a number of local councils for which we are really grateful. West Dean, Newent, Cinderford, Tidenham and Newnham Councils, thank you for your support.



Chepstow, Remembrance Sunday

Diary Dates

Caldicot Male Voice Choir - Sat 11 Jan 2025

Caldicot Male Voice Choir will sing for SARA, on 11th Jan at 7pm at The Drill Hall Chepstow. Tickets will go on sale in early December.

SARA Fitness Test Race - Sun 26 Jan 2025

Have you ever wondered how the SARA team prove their fitness? Could you take on the annual SARA fitness test, an 8km route in the Forest of Dean, carrying a 10kg backpack? Don't fancy carrying anything? You also have that option too.

Join us at Mallards Pike Lake, in the Forest of Dean, at 9.30am on 26 Jan. Entries for this will open in early December as well.

Devauden Races - May BH Mon 5 May 2025

After a successful first event for SARA, the popular Devauden Races are on again in May. For more information and entries, please visit www.sara-rescue.org.uk/devaudenraces

Wild Wye SwimRun - Sun 15 Jun 2025

Can you brave the mighty Wye? The year's favourite race for some, the 4th 'WWSR' is on Sunday 15 June. Run 13km and Swim 100m. Entries will open in Jan; for more info, please see www.wildwyeswimrun.org.

And if you don't fancy these, catch us at:

- Chepstow Christmas Market on Fri 29 Nov
- Tesco Chepstow Collection on Sat 7 Dec
- Lots of Chepstow Pubs on Fri 13 Dec

And please keep an eye on our Facebook page!

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