



# SARA

## Beachley and Newport

Winter 2016-17



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

## Operational Activities

2017 has got off to a flying start for the SARA Team, with 13 callouts in January alone – twice the rate of last year. One or two have been false alarms of course, including a hoax call to the police, which resulted in the Newport lifeboat being launched. However the majority have been serious tasks, challenges to which the SARA teams have risen and met.

The primary Beachley lifeboat SARA 1 'The Jim Hewitt' has been launched several times to rescue boats in trouble, including one which was escorted all the way to Portishead with a SARA emergency high-volume pump working away. On another occasion SARA 1 was dispatched directly to Portishead, to support the RNLI boat and local Coastguard on a tasking close to the Avonmouth Bridge.



The Gwent Lifeboat SARA 14 'The Maureen Easton', based at Newport, has also been busy. As an example she was deployed on the recovery task on the Wye described below, and then later that day was launched again on the Usk to search for a canadian canoe which had been spotted drifting – the canoe was found and recovered, but it did not appear that anyone had been on board.

The Land Search team was in action in Gloucester immediately after Christmas. This was followed by a two-day search in the Forest of Dean at the end of January, and again in early February by another long - but ultimately successful - operation on both sides of the River Severn south of Gloucester. These operations have seen teams from all SARA Stations working together, as well as with units from South Wales Search and Rescue Dogs, the Police, the Coastguard and their respective helicopters.

## Body Found in the Wye

A sad but dramatic find on 8 January made the headlines across the Beachley area. A land search training exercise – a 'small item search' – had been set up close to a bank of the River Wye. However, en route to the location, a body was found on the bank, so was reported to the Police immediately.

Following the correct procedures, the area was secured and Police attended. With their agreement, and in consultation with Beachley

'Control', two SARA lifeboats were dispatched. The body was recovered by lifeboat and subsequently handed over to the Police and Coastguard.

In the following days the body was identified, and the family of the deceased have made a private visit to the Station. They were able to meet many of the team involved in the recovery, and expressed their thanks for bringing this chapter of their lives to a close.

# Coastguard Visit

By Mark Carwardine

On Sunday 29th January 2017, SARA Beachley welcomed a delegation from HM Coastguard. The visitors were from the Rescue Coordination Centre, based at Milford Haven. This Centre is responsible for coordinating maritime rescues around the UK and for the 'tasking' of the SARA Lifeboats to emergencies on the Severn and Bristol Channel. This offered an opportunity for our crews and theirs, who are used to communicating via the medium of Marine Band VHF Radio, to meet face-to-face.

Recognising the value of getting a real understanding of the operational area within which we operate, the HMCG staff were taken for a period of local area familiarisation onboard the flagship SARA Lifeboat 1 'Jim Hewitt'. This allowed the SARA crew to discuss the unique complications that the River Severn can present when rescue working, with a huge tidal range (>15m) and a flood/ebb tide with speeds in excess of 8kn.



The HMCG staff (many of whom are operational Lifeboat Crew with Tenby RNLI) were very complimentary about the overall operation at Beachley Station. They noted specifically the high standard of communications equipment carried by the SARA vessels, and the exceptional capability of the vessels themselves.

The day was a great success and there was much constructive conversation about search planning and rescue coordination in the SARA area. We hope that this will be the first of many more such visits, as our two agencies improve their already fantastic working relations.

# Just another Saturday for the Newport Team

By Barry Buxton



The Saturday morning started off with my alarm clock not going off, which made me think "it's going to be one of those days". So, later than planned, off I went to Newport Station and got all the fundraising items, our lifeboat SARA 14 'The Maureen Easton', plus other rescue equipment in case of a callout. I made sure I had tie-downs for the gazebo as it said it was going to rain.

With all the equipment packed, off we went to Cwmbran Shopping Centre. The staff were very helpful as always, and assisted us in finding our location, not our normal place but there we go. It's their Centre after all. Fundraising started off on a high with tea and bacon butties; the public were very interested in who we are and what we do.

When we go to Cwmbran it always rains, so it was just as well we had the gazebo. With a bit of sun the money started coming back. One member of the public spotted me and questioned our different boats. During a long conversation I explained all about SARA, and in the end he happily donated.

Then the pager went off, for a callout to Newport. So down came the gazebo, packed all the kit away, got the security staff ready for an escort out of the Shopping Centre. Just then we received a 'stand down' page.

So once again we unpacked, set up, and started fundraising. The day went on well, helped by Colin who had arrived with his search dog.

Just after the lunch the pager went off again; another call for our services. So again we had to pack up. This time we returned to Malpas and exchanged SARA 14 for the smaller Rescue 19. On the way round we picked up more crew, headed for the Forest of Dean, and the rest is history.

Despite it all, we made a decent amount for SARA whilst we were at Cwmbran, so I was happy.

## Swim Event Sells Out

A new fundraising event for SARA has sold out within 3 days of opening! The Wild Wye Swim, which is planned for September, will bring swimmers from across the country to Symonds Yat, and raise money for SARA. This is the first year of the event. Entries opened on Wednesday morning, 1 Feb, and the event had filled up completely by Friday evening.



Up to 75 swimmers will swim down the Wye from Kerne Bridge to Huntsham Bridge, near Symonds Yat, a distance of around 12km, with a further 75 swimming the shorter 7km distance from Lower Lydbrook to Huntsham Bridge. The swim course includes the spectacular long bend in the river below the Yat Rock viewpoint. SARA crew members and safety boats, from across the different SARA Rescue Stations, will keep everyone safe.

Deputy Chairman Mark Carwardine commented: "We are absolutely delighted with the response. We hope that this will become an annual event, bring visitors to the area as well as generating funds and publicity for SARA. It is a great opportunity for people to enjoy the beautiful Wye Valley, and for SARA to utilize our skilled volunteers and specialist safety equipment".

We are very grateful to a number of landowners in the area for making this event possible. We are also looking for sponsors for the event, and would love to hear from any organisations that are interested in becoming involved. Details of the event and how to contact us are on the event website, [www.wildwyeswim.org.uk](http://www.wildwyeswim.org.uk)

## Fundraising

The run up to Christmas is always a productive time for fundraising activities. The Newport Team held collections at Tescos on Cardiff Road and at Friars Walk, and the Beachley Team ran a stand at Cotswold Outdoor in Bristol for two days.



It is always great to meet members of the public who often express their appreciation for the work of SARA, and we are grateful for all donations received.

We are grateful too for people and organisations who put on fundraising events for us - in the past couple of months Lydney Yacht Club, the Royal Oak in Whitecroft and Devauden Village Hall, to name only three.

## Station Visits

The Beachley and Newport Stations are always open to visitors. Small parties can be accommodated on a training day, but larger parties can be accommodated at almost any time by prior arrangement!



Festive runners from Chepstow Harriers practice crewing SARA 1 (without leaving the boathouse)





## Recruiting

SARA is recruiting at the moment, both for new operational team members and for Supporters. We are looking for new crew members, especially to join the Beachley Land Search Team, with a training programme starting in May. Once qualified, team members may then also train for lifeboats, swift water or cliff rescue.

Fundraisers help to raise the essential money, which is needed to keep the Station operational. Other Supporters have skills such as administration and vehicle mechanics, which are essential to keeping the operation going.

Whether you are thinking about training to become operational crew, or to help in other ways, download and send-in the Application Form from [www.sara-rescue.org.uk/join-us](http://www.sara-rescue.org.uk/join-us), or contact [beachley.trainingmanager@sara-rescue.org.uk](mailto:beachley.trainingmanager@sara-rescue.org.uk) for more information.

## Thanks to our Donors

Our collecting tins continue to bring in a steady flow of necessary funding toward our operational costs.

Whilst "every penny counts" is an often used and familiar quotation, we are acutely aware that SARA Beachley's annual operational overheads exceed £40,000.

We are very grateful to all who have contributed toward our vital work



Land Search Party Leader Kevin Caster discussing a search operation with a Police Officer, late on a wet Friday evening in January

## Donate @ Just Giving

As a charity SARA depends on donations.

To donate to SARA, please visit:  
[www.justgiving.com/sara-rescue/Donate](http://www.justgiving.com/sara-rescue/Donate)

Don't forget to tick the 'Gift Aid' box so that we can claim an additional 25% of your gift back from the tax-man

**Today, I was part of a team saving someone's life...**

- Boat Crew
- Shore Crew
- Mountain Rescue Team
- Comms Officer
- Incident Controller
- Administrator
- Fundraiser
- Rope Technician
- Mechanic
- Station Technician
- Swift Water Technician
- Medic
- Trainer

**What will you do tomorrow?**

[www.sara-rescue.org.uk/join-us](http://www.sara-rescue.org.uk/join-us)

Registered Charity Number: 505504

SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association) is a U.K. Registered Charity No: 505504  
Registered Address: The Lifeboat & Rescue Station, Beachley Road, Chepstow NP16 7HH