

## Beachley Lifeboat & Rescue Station

Lifeboats; Land Search; Cliff, Mud, Mountain, 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. The teams based at Beachley (near Chepstow) and Newport work together, to perform rescues on the Usk, Ebbw and Wye as well as the Severn, and to conduct land search and rescue across Gloucestershire. In 2020 SARA conducted 126 different operations.

### Rescuing JetSkiers and Kayakers

For SARA the early summer months have been busy as ever. Callouts are though always like buses... The Late May Bank Holiday weekend was a record for SARA, see separate story inside. The two lifeboat callouts to leisure users on consecutive days in late July show the value of the SARA Lifeboats!

At 7.20pm on a Tuesday, our lifeboat crew responded to two jet skis which had broken down near the second Severn crossing, and needed help. SARA Lifeboats 1 and 3 both launched. The tide was falling and there was only around 1m of water depth, so the lighter SARA 3 crept over the sands and towed both back to SARA 1. One of the jet skis had run out of fuel and the other had a flat battery, so SARA 3 returned to Beachley to collect fuel and a jump start kit.

The following day two well-prepared kayakers became stuck in a remote corner of the Lower Wye below Wyndcliff and called the Coastguard. They had been making their way from Brockweir to Chepstow on the outgoing tide had fallen behind schedule and one had become injured on rocks, unable to proceed.

They were initially located by a SARA team member on foot and given much needed drinking water. SARA Lifeboat 1 was launched, initially to assist the kayakers but it quickly turned out that the injured kayaker could not continue, so everything was loaded onto SARA 1 and transported to Beachley, from where onward transport could be arranged.

We have recently also launched to support someone in danger on the M48 Bridge and to a drifting vessel at Tintern, and in mid-June had 3 lifeboat callouts in 3 days – including another jet-ski, stranded on Oldbury Sands with the passenger becoming hypothermic.

On the missing person 'land search' side, in June we were called out to look for a missing lady near Sedbury, a missing child near Leckhampton, and at the start of July to the Forest of Dean close to Cinderford. Each time we were asked to stand down as the missing person had thankfully been found quickly and was with the police.



The crew were able to restart one jet ski, but the other had to be towed, initially by the larger SARA 1. SARA 3 then took over to allow SARA 1 to recover before the level of water dropped too low. After an hour's tow against the tide, SARA 3 got the second jet ski safely back to Beachley slip at 22.50



## SARA's Record Callout Weekend

What a weekend the Late May Bank Holiday was! One ambitious fundraising event followed by six callouts in under 36 hours!

Sunday morning was our inaugural Wild Wye SwimRun (see later), which involved an early start and was completed by 1.30pm. Just before 4pm there was a callout to help the ambulance service with a fallen climber at Shorncliff, opposite Tintern - not too far from the SwimRun in fact. Many of the team from the race turned out there.



Then at 1am (now on Monday morning) land search teams responded to a request from Gloucestershire Constabulary to assist in the search for a missing lady at May Hill - she was overdue for a rendezvous with friends. The lady was found by the Police early in the morning, checked at scene our casualty carers.

Just after 5.30pm, Beachley and Newport water rescue teams were scrambled to head to the Monmouth area, where Gwent Police were concerned for a missing child. She was reported found safe not long after 6, and we were stood down as we were arriving on scene.

Shortly before 9pm the SARA Sharpness and Beachley lifeboats were called out on reports of missing kayakers somewhere below Lydney. They were located safe after about 20 minutes.

At 9.30pm Beachley and Newport water rescue teams were again called to Monmouth, to reports of a body in the water. Along with the Fire Service this was investigated, but concluded to be a false alarm with good intent, and we were stood down at 10.30pm.

And just as that was happening, teams from SARA Tewkesbury and Wyre Forest were deployed to Bromsgrove to support West Mercia Police with a search. Thankfully that person too was located safe and well by 11.30pm and our teams could be stood down.

## SARA Cotswolds

At the start of July SARA announced that we were establish a new station in the Cotswolds, based within Cirencester Fire Station. We will be provided with parking spaces for vehicles, storage for equipment and a meeting and training room, as well as kitchen and toilet facilities within the fire station.



John Dutton, our overall land search manager, said: "This new base will make a significant improvement to our ability to search for and find missing people in the Cotswolds and eastern part of Gloucestershire. We're very grateful to the Fire Service for making suitable facilities available and we look forward to getting to know the local community over the coming months.

Mark Preece, Chief Fire Officer, said: "It's great news we're able to accommodate Severn Area Rescue Association at Cirencester Fire Station. We work closely with them on many incidents, including searches for missing persons, so this can only help to improve the response to those at risk."

Assistant Chief Constable Rhiannon Kirk, of Gloucestershire Constabulary, said: "Working with agencies like SARA and our fire colleagues is vital in helping us find many missing people each year so this is great news.

"SARA provides specialist expertise on water and on land so their increased presence in a rural area like the Cotswolds is a very welcome development that will strengthen our response even further."

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## Fundraising Events

After a long gap for obvious reasons, we have now re-started fundraising events - generating vital income. Here are some highlights!

Sunday morning 30 May was our inaugural Wild Wye SwimRun. This is an 8 mile running race starting and finishing in Chepstow with the route taking in the stunning Wye Valley. Much of it is on private land (thank you!) within a SSSI. The run is spiced up with a 100m river crossing of the Wye at high tide. We had 5 boats and SRT Teams on both banks providing safety cover, in a great multi-station effort.

The aim is to make it an annual event which will raise around £5,000 and we had great feedback from the runners. Next year's race will be on Sun 3 July – it has to move around the calendar due to tide times.



3 July was a Saturday this year and the day of our annual Duck Race. A huge crowd, or at least quite a lot of covid-safe spectators, watched our lifeboat demonstration and then the 1000 ducks being dropped from the A48 bridge. The winning ducks were 393, 752 and 245! Thanks to The Boat Inn for hosting us.



And we were finally back at Tesco Chepstow on 26 June, raising an amazing £850 from generous shoppers!



## Providing Safety Cover

Also back on again after a gap is SARA provision of safety and first aid cover to local outdoor-based events organised by other organisations. We undertake this role partly to support the local community, partly to raise our profile and also to put skills like first aid and boat handling into play 'in the field'. These events provide real-world experience, including working as part of a large team, and recent outings have provided this in spades!

The largest such event was the Upton Triathlon, which involved 300 swimmers in the River Severn. SARA had 7 boats from 5 stations out working together to provide the water safety cover, plus a large team of first aiders. In recent weeks we have also covered the Wild Boar Triathlon (based at the Chepstow Dive Centre), the monthly Cromhall Lake evening Triathlons, the Monmouth Aquathlon and in mid-July we covered the Forest Warrior obstacle race in Gloucestershire, which gave our Casualty Carers some good experience!

## Specialist Training

A recent series of successful training weekends across SARA saw 8 land search party leaders complete a course in basic search planning in Gloucester and 9 team members qualifying or re-certifying as Casualty Carers in the Mendips. Each of these courses was run by volunteers, as well as attended by them.



We are grateful to colleagues from Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team and Avon & Somerset Search and Rescue for making these courses possible. (as well as our team doctor!). Also to some amazing trainee makeup artists from Weston College!



## Drowning Prevention

Sunday 25 July was the first 'World Drowning Prevention Day', following the RLSS' 'Drowning Prevention Week' in June. At SARA we try to distribute useful messages and content on our social media, and we are working to develop this part of our web presence too.

Worldwide, an estimated 235,600 people drown every year, and drowning is among the ten leading causes of death for children aged 5-14 years. In this school holiday season, please keep Water Safety in mind at the seaside and other swimming venues! #RespectTheWater

**Summer WATER SAFETY**

Drowning accidents are always especially high in the summer months and over the last few years we have heard of too many tragedies that could have been avoided.

Every year people drown both at home and on holiday because they don't take simple precautions, so reaching people with water safety messages is vital.

We want people to enjoy the water safely. Please help to avoid another tragic summer this year by spreading the following water safety advice far and wide.

- LOOK OUT FOR LIFEGUARDS**  
If you're looking for a place to cool off, always find a lifeguarded swimming site
- IT'S COLDER THAN IT LOOKS**  
Water at open and inland sites is often much colder than it looks. Cold water can affect your ability to swim and self-rescue
- DON'T GO TOO FAR**  
Always swim parallel to the shore, that way you'll never be too far away from it
- IT'S STRONGER THAN IT LOOKS**  
Currents in the water can be very strong. If you find yourself caught in a current - don't swim against it - you'll tire yourself out. Stay calm, swim with the current and call for help
- BRING A FRIEND**  
Always bring a friend when you go swimming so if anything goes wrong, you've got someone there to help

Supported by

**SARA**  
Severn Area Rescue Association

For more information visit: [rflss.org.uk](http://rflss.org.uk)

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY

We are also very conscious of the risk from accidents. Every year, something like 85% of men who go missing after a night out are found in the water. Please #BeAMate and don't let your friend walk home alone alongside a canal or river. #DontDrinkandDrown.

## Thank You!

The Covid pandemic hit our fundraising efforts hard, and we are extremely grateful for the support of the local community.

Chepstow Town Council always support SARA with an annual grant, but this year we were delighted to be awarded an extra £6000. This makes a really helpful contribution and we were delighted to host the Mayor and his Deputy at the Duck Race - below with our CEO Mark.



Andrew Phelps and his team at Easy Car Care in Chepstow once again assisted SARA. One evening at the start of July we noticed a leak on our L200 (Mobile 2). The vehicle was dropped off at 0830, and by 1230 it was all sorted - the power steering system was repaired, fluid topped up and all for no expense.

Other amazing supporters include Lynsey, who swam Ullswater End to End, in 5 hours and 50 minutes, helping to raise funds for us to replace vital lifeboat PPE. The Fox Easter Compton hosted a Shanty Day, with the Severn Whalers singing (or wailing?), with a collection for us.

SARA team member Rachel Brown 'raced to the stones' (100km!) raising money for SARA, and Roy Jago and his wife have been busy selling plants and craft products in aid of SARA as well as running information stands.

Thank you one and all!

## Please Donate Monthly

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

Just visit [www.sara-rescue.org.uk/donate](http://www.sara-rescue.org.uk/donate) and set up a monthly donation.

SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association) is a Registered Charity in England & Wales No: 505504  
Registered Address: The Lifeboat & Rescue Station, Beachley Road, Chepstow NP16 7HH  
[www.sara-rescue.org.uk](http://www.sara-rescue.org.uk)