

# Severn Area Rescue Association Annual Report and Accounts 2015



THE LARGEST INDEPENDENT MULTI-DISCIPLINARY  
VOLUNTEER SEARCH AND RESCUE TEAM IN THE UK

OVER FORTY YEARS OF LIFEBOAT SERVICE ON THE SEVERN



## Contents

Reference and Administrative Details

Constitution Objectives and Operations

Chairman's Report

Independent Examiners Report

Financial Statements

Notes to the Financial Statements

Annex: Operational Roles and Tasks



Pride of the Fleet: SARA 1 'The Jim Hewitt', launched this year and based at Beachley Lifeboat and Rescue Station

## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Name: Severn Area Rescue Association (also known as Severn Rescue and as SARA)

SARA Charity Number: 505504

Registered Address: The Lifeboat Station, Beachley,  
Chepstow NP16 7HH

Independent Examiner: Mr N Webb, FCA  
Baldwins (Stourbridge) Ltd  
First Floor Copthall House  
1 New Road, Stourbridge DY8 1PH

Bankers: Lloyds Bank Plc, Manor Way, Chepstow

The Executive Committee is responsible for the overall running of the association, in relation to all Financial, Safety, Legal and Operational matters. They are also Charity Trustees. Those who served on the Executive Committee during the year were as follows:

Chairman	Mr C Cowley	(appointed 13/6/13)
Deputy Chairman	Mr M Carwardine	(appointed 13/6/13)
Secretary	vacancy	
Treasurer	Ms E Lock	(appointed 19/8/13)
Beachley Station Chair	Mr M Fleming	(appointed 17/5/07)
Tewkesbury Station Chair	Mr T Carter	(appointed 6/6/14)
Sharpness Station Chair	Mr G Dawe	(appointed 27/3/08)
Wyre Forest Station Chair	Mr P Watkins	(to 28/5/15)
	Mr N Harvey	(appointed 28/5/15)
Fundraising Officer	Mr N Gregory	(to 28/5/15)
	Ms C Carter	(appointed 28/5/15)

In addition the Association has 3 Custodian Trustees, appointed at the Annual General Meeting. Those who served as Custodian Trustees during the year were as follows:

Mr A Stanley  
Mr JMJ Hewitt  
Mr K Hadley

During 2015 a Land Search Manager and a Communications Manager were additionally co-opted onto the Executive Committee.

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The Committees for the Beachley, Tewkesbury, Sharpness and Wyre Forest Stations are responsible for the day to day running of each of the respective rescue stations.

Each Station Committee comprises: Station Chairman (a charity trustee and executive member as above), Secretary, Treasurer, Station Manager, Fundraising Manager, Boat Manager, Land Search Manager and Training Manager. In addition, each station also has a representative for Health & Safety issues, Communications and Medical Managers.

The association is made up totally of volunteers with no paid staff.

## CONSTITUTION OBJECTIVES AND OPERATIONS

The Severn Area Rescue Association, also known as Severn Rescue, and as SARA, is the largest independent multi-disciplinary volunteer search and rescue team in the UK. SARA is also the largest independent lifeboat service in the UK, second only to the RNLI, with 14 operational boats and approximately 170 personnel

### Constitution

SARA is governed by its Constitution and is a registered charity. The objects of the association, as stated in the Constitution (amended March 2006) are:

- The protection of life and property by the provision and maintenance of a rescue service with, in particular, specialist skills in marine and cliff rescue;
- To assist Government Departments and County and Local Authorities in their provision of emergency services;
- To advance public education in Marine and Cliff rescue in particular, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing by the provision of training courses;
- In furtherance thereof but not otherwise, to raise funds and to invite contributions from any person or persons whomsoever by way of subscription, donation, or otherwise.

The Association is non-profit making and financed by voluntary contributions, charitable trusts, and grants from Local Authorities and any such other organizations or bodies duly authorized to make grants to the Association's cause.

### The Achievement Of The Objects Of The Charity

The policies adopted by the Executive Committee during the course of the year have met the objects of the Charity in the following ways:

- Through the association's 4 rescue stations attending over 100 callouts during the year, all tasked by the other emergency services.
- Through the provision of Water Safety scenarios for schools and other interested groups to raise awareness for everyone, especially children, to become more 'water aware'.
- Through the ongoing provision of recognised training courses held both internally and externally to promote the professionalism of the organisation.



## Why SARA?

SARA was founded in 1973, with its headquarters then at Tutshill - near the current Beachley station. At this time the RNLI did not cover river estuaries – such as the River Severn. There was felt to be a need for rescue organisation responsible for this hazardous stretch of river, particularly following the closure of the Aust Ferry after the opening of the Severn Bridge in 1966. In 1986 a second station was opened at Sharpness, primarily in response to a tragic loss of life in the Sharpness area.

In 1985 SARA also became an official Mountain Rescue Team in the role of Cliff rescue for the Wye valley. At that time the Fire Brigade had no role in relation to cliffs and rope rescue.

During the floods of July 2007 (the major adverse weather event that spawned the DEFRA National Flood Rescue Enhancement project), SARA was the first volunteer team to be tasked and the last to be stood down. In 2011 a Joint 'Water Rescue Centre' opened in Tewkesbury, as a strategic alliance between Gloucester Fire & Rescue Service, SARA and Gloucestershire County Council, following major flooding in Tewkesbury area.

A station was opened at Wyre Forest in 2004, to cover the upper Severn area. In 2014 Wyre Forest Station moved into Hereford & Worcestershire Fire & Rescue Service facilities at Kidderminster, under a co-hosting arrangement.



Cliff Rescue training at Wyntours Leap, Chepstow

## **The Operations of the Charity**

SARA's Mission Statement is:

To protect life and property through the provision of a professionally trained, specialist rescue service for marine and land search incidents

The principal area of marine operations comprises the Bristol Channel and the Severn, Wye, Avon, and Usk rivers. Land operations extend to South East Wales, the West of England and the Midlands. Typical situations involved vessels suffering breakdown or damage by grounding, becoming lost in severely restricted visibility, a particularly dangerous situation. As a Rescue Boat Organisation, SARA complies with the Lifeboat Code of Practice (2013).

All SARA stations are members of Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW) and SARA is part of SWERA the South West England Rescue Association.

SARA works closely with the statutory emergency services – Police, Fire & Rescue Services and HM Coastguard – and also with neighbouring and related volunteer rescue organisations. These particularly include RNLI Portishead, Longtown Mountain Rescue Team and the South Wales Search and Rescue Dogs Association (SARDA).

Further details of SARA Operational roles are provided in the Annex.



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The need for SARA is increasing with more callouts evident year on year. The variety and range of callouts is also increasing. In 2015 SARA's Beachley and Newport Lifeboat crews and Mountain Rescue teams were called to action on sixty separate occasions, the Sharpness lifeboats launched 36 times. In 2015 SARA teams were credited with being instrumental in the saving of twenty-four lives.

One of the highlights of the year was the winning of a £220,000 Government Grant - part of the proceeds from the LIBOR fines – which allowed us to purchase a replacement SARA 1 lifeboat for Beachley. This was the first and only time in which official funds have funded a lifeboat, and demonstrates the high esteem in which SARA is held. Christened 'The Jim Hewitt' after one of our founders, the Delta 8mtr Rigid Inflatable (RIB) Rescue Craft, with its self-righting system, was launched in October – and was soon in service supporting a cliff rescue on the Chepstow cliffs.

The grant also enabled the purchase of a quantity of lifeboat Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), providing SARA crews with safety equipment on a par with other rescue boat organisations.

As a result of the acquisition of 'new SARA 1', the 6.75m 'Old SARA 1' has now been renumbered as SARA Lifeboat 20, and is retained as Beachley for use as a training boat.

We received another vital and unique asset in form of a Hovercraft to be based at Sharpness, thanks to a donation from Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service. This allows a far improved response capability to the particularly dangerous situation at Sharpness / Lydney. Here the start of the flood tide is renowned for its speed and ability to trap the unwary on sandbanks exposed at low water, submerging within fifteen minutes. The hovercraft is able to access these sandbanks with no water, whatsoever, historically a problem getting to the casualties by lifeboat. All of the Sharpness crew have been trained throughout the year to Pilot and crew the hovercraft. The Sharpness station continues to suffer from poor housing conditions, with no heating or drying areas for equipment.



Due to the continuing generosity of the Mark Master Masons, the Sharpness D-class equivalent lifeboat, 'Alan Bibby Vidi Boy'" was also replaced. The new and unique Lifeboat, built by SeaSwift Boats of Newton Abbot, is fully self-righting. The provision of the lifeboat was necessary due to the introduction of the Rescue Boat Code of Practice, to which its predecessor was not compliant.

In December we said farewell to our friends at 22 Sqn RAF. It was sad to see the yellow helicopter depart for the last time, but we look forward to working with the new HM Coastguard helicopters.

Our Flood Rescue team was deployed on two occasions to nationwide major flooding incidents. As the year closed they were returning from operations in West Yorkshire, where their assistance was much appreciated by the local emergency services.

During 2015 the Executive Committee continued to meet on a monthly basis. SARA works closely with all local communities and continues to be represented at Local Resilience Forums across the whole of our operational area by members of the Executive committee. I would like to thank Merv Fleming and Alan Stanley for their work with the All Wales Flood Rescue Forums, and John Dutton for his liaison with MREW. It is vital for us to maintain strong links with our emergency services partners and we approach this in line with 'Key Account' management principles.

Our main concern continues to be around cash flow. Bank account running at c.£48k and should be at £100k in order to ensure good governance. Our running costs and cash flow are the most concerning matter. Appreciate all the effort that has been put in, but as CC points out we need more secure forms of income than street collections and collecting tins. Thanks to the Treasurer for her efforts in gathering the information and producing the accounts – not a straightforward process and it is acknowledged that huge steps forward have been taken and great progress made by Elaine to date.

My great thanks go to all crew members, for their dedication to the safety of the public, and for regularly putting their own lives at risk to ensure those in danger have the best possible chance of survival. I also offer my heartfelt thanks to the partners and families of our crew, who allow them to do such dangerous work, and when the callout comes, usually in the middle of the night or in severely adverse conditions, are left at home, not knowing what their loved ones are facing, or indeed if they are coming home.

I would like to thank all our crews, coxswains, support crew, Deputy Launch Authorities and fundraisers for their continued support, because without these efforts SARA would not be here today.

## **RISKS AND INSURANCE**

### **Review of risks**

The Executive Committee continues to conduct a review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and systems are in place to mitigate those risks. Internal risks are minimised by the continued implementation of procedures for authorisation of financial transactions.

The association has a Standard Operating Procedures Manual which each member must follow, and a Health & Safety Policy implemented in 2003 is continually under review by the Executive Health & Safety Advisor. Whilst SARA is not bound by the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974, (as we are a part of Mountain Rescue England & Wales (MREW) which is exempt from the above act) the Executive Committee policy is that - due to the fact that we work with other emergency services that are bound by this act - it follows that the organisation should take it on board as 'best practice'. To that end, a Health & Safety officer is appointed by each Rescue Station to cover H&S issues.

### **Insurances**

The charity has in place the following insurances:

- Public Liability
- Marine Insurance (covering all boats, trailers, engines etc.)
- Launch Vehicles specialist insurance,
- Motor Insurance for all mobile rescue units
- Personal Accident Liability
- Buildings Insurance cover (Beachley Station)
- Buildings Contents liability (Beachley, Sharpness and Wyre Forest)

Medical Indemnity Insurance remains in place to ensure cover for the increasing amounts of First Aid cover SARA is requested to provide. Trustees Liability Insurance is also in place as laid down in the charity's constitution.

Additional insurance cover is provided through Mountain Rescue England & Wales (MREW) via our membership of the South West England Rescue Association and by various Police Authorities within our operational areas by whom we are tasked and cover is provided for callouts and training. The Executive Committee continues to monitor Insurance policies.

Cost of Insurances has increased over the past 12 months from £15,840 to £27,825.



## **INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES OF SARA**

This report on the accounts of SARA for the year ended 31 December 2015, which are set out on pages 12 to 17, is in respect of an examination carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011 ('The Act')

### **Respective Responsibilities of Trustees and Examiner**

The trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. You consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 ('the 2011 Act') and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act and to follow the procedures laid down in the General Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### **Basis of Independent Examiner's Report**

My examination was carried out in accordance with the General Directions given by the Charity Commission. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by SARA and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express any audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

### **Independent Examiner's Statement**

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

(1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the Act; and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met; or

(2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Mr N Webb, FCA  
Baldwins (Stourbridge) Ltd  
First Floor Copthall House  
1 New Road, Stourbridge DY8 1PH  
17 May 2016

## FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

### Statement of financial activities

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total 2015	Total 2014
	£	£	£	£
<b>Incoming resources (Note 3)</b>				
<b>Incoming resources from generated funds</b>				
Voluntary income	48,450	256,414	304,864	154,852
Activities for generating funds	26,024		26,024	28,964
Investment income	3		3	2
<b>Incoming resources from charitable activities</b>	28,632		28,632	22,028
<b><i>Total incoming resources</i></b>	<b>103,109</b>	<b>256,414</b>	<b>359,523</b>	<b>205,846</b>
<b>Resources expended (Notes 4-5)</b>				
Fundraising trading costs	1,687		1,687	3,757
<b>Charitable activities</b>	107,798	152,514	260,312	159,058
<b>Governance costs</b>	7,706		7,706	32,272
<b><i>Total resources expended</i></b>	<b>117,191</b>	<b>152,514</b>	<b>269,705</b>	<b>195,087</b>
<b><i>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before transfers</i></b>	<b>(14,082)</b>	<b>103,900</b>	<b>89,818</b>	<b>10,759</b>
<b><i>Net incoming/(outgoing) resources before other recognised gains/(losses)</i></b>	<b>(14,082)</b>	<b>103,900</b>	<b>89,818</b>	<b>10,759</b>
<b>Other recognised gains/(losses)</b>				
<b><i>Net movement in funds</i></b>	<b>(14,082)</b>	<b>103,900</b>	<b>89,818</b>	<b>10,759</b>
<b>Total funds brought forward</b>	82,745	329,034	411,779	401,020
<b><i>Total funds carried forward</i></b>	<b>68,663</b>	<b>432,934</b>	<b>501,597</b>	<b>411,779</b>

## Balance Sheet

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted income funds	Total 2015	Total 2014
	£	£	£	£
<b>Fixed assets</b>				
Tangible assets (Notes 6-7)	71,484	396,411	467,895	320,733
Investments				
<b>Total fixed assets</b>	<u>71,484</u>	<u>396,411</u>	<u>467,895</u>	<u>320,733</u>
<b>Current assets</b>				
Debtors				2,592
(Short term) investments		1,296	1,296	1,296
Cash at bank and in hand	9,828	35,227	45,055	100,979
<b>Total current assets</b>	<u>9,828</u>	<u>36,523</u>	<u>46,351</u>	<u>104,867</u>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year (Note 8)</b>	12,649		12,649	13,821
<b>Net current assets/(liabilities)</b>	(2,821)	36,523	33,702	91,046
<b>Net assets</b>	<u>68,663</u>	<u>432,934</u>	<u>501,597</u>	<u>411,779</u>
<b>Funds of the Charity</b>				
Unrestricted funds	68,663		68,663	82,745
Restricted income funds (Note 9)		432,934	432,934	329,034
<b>Total funds</b>	<u>68,663</u>	<u>432,934</u>	<u>501,597</u>	<u>411,779</u>

## **NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015**

### **1. Basis of preparation**

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention and in accordance with the Statement of Recommended Practice 'Accounting and Reporting by Charities (SORP FRSSE)', issued in March 2013, the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities (effective January 2015) and the Charities Act 2011.

There has been no change to the accounting policies (valuation rules and methods of accounting) since 2014.

No changes have been made to accounts for previous years.

### **2. Financial Policies**

Unrestricted income funds are general funds that are available for use at the trustees' discretion in furtherance of the objectives of the charity.

Restricted funds are those donated for use in a particular area or for specific purposes, the use of which is restricted to that area or purpose.

#### **Unrestricted Funds**

The Executive Committee's policy is that unrestricted funds held by the charity that are not committed or invested in fixed assets, should be up to 6 months running costs. At this level the Executive Committee believes that they will be able to continue to run the charity in the event of a significant drop in funding.

At the end of the financial year the Unrestricted Funds amounted to £68,863.

#### **Restricted Funds**

At the end of the financial year the Restricted Funds amounted to £432,934.

#### **Investment Policy**

The Executive Committee has continued to use the National Savings Bank for investing the Restricted Funds and the deposit account with Lloyds Bank plc for the Project Account. Unrestricted funds continue to be banked in the Executive Current Account with Lloyds Bank plc which offers immediate access to funds.

**3 Incoming resources**

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Voluntary income</b>		
Donations	82,700	151,247
Grants	221,046	3,605
<b>Total</b>	<u>303,746</u>	<u>154,852</u>
<b>Activities for generating funds</b>		
Fundraising	26,024	28,964
<b>Total</b>	<u>26,024</u>	<u>28,964</u>
<b>Investment income</b>		
Interest	3	2
<b>Total</b>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>

**4 Resources expended**

Charitable expenditure comprises those costs incurred by the charity in the delivery of its activities and services for its beneficiaries. It includes both costs that can be allocated directly to such activities and those costs of an indirect nature necessary to support them.

Governance costs include costs of the preparation and examination of the statutory accounts, the costs of trustee meetings and the cost of any legal advice to trustees on governance or constitutional matters.

	<b>2015</b>	<b>2014</b>
	<b>£</b>	<b>£</b>
<b>Fundraising trading costs</b>		
Fundraising Costs	1,687	3,757
<b>Total</b>	<u>1,687</u>	<u>3,757</u>
<b>Charitable activities</b>		
Insurances	27,825	15,840
Consumables	105,823	47,551
Repairs & Maintenance	16,925	25,091
Fuel	14,654	12,977
Depreciation	95,085	57,599
<b>Total</b>	<u>260,312</u>	<u>159,058</u>
<b>Governance costs</b>		
Administration	7,706	32,272
<b>Total</b>	<u>7,706</u>	<u>32,272</u>

## 5 Details of certain items of expenditure

### 5.1 Trustee expenses

	2015	2014
Total amount paid	None	None

### 5.2 Fees for examination or audit of the accounts

	2015 £	2014 £
Independent examiner's or auditors' fees for reporting on the accounts	1000	960
Other fees (for example: advice, consultancy, accountancy services) paid to the independent examiner or auditor	None	None

## 6 Tangible fixed assets

### 6.1 Cost or valuation

	Freehold land & buildings	Plant, machinery and motor vehicles	Total
	£	£	£
Balance brought forward	387,900	536,304	924,204
Additions		242,247	242,247
Revaluations			
Disposals		(8,000)	(8,000)
Balance carried forward	387,900	770,551	1,158,451

### 6.2 Accumulated depreciation and impairment provisions

Balance brought forward	150,541	452,930	603,471
Depreciation charge for year	15,516	79,569	95,085
Disposals	-	(8,000)	(8,000)
Balance carried forward	166,057	524,499	690,556

### 6.3 Net book value

Brought forward	237,359	83,374	320,733
Carried forward	221,843	246,052	467,895

## 7 Debtors and prepayments

	Amounts falling due within one year		Amounts falling due after more than one year	
	2015	2014	2015	2014
	£	£	£	£
Prepayments and accrued income		2,592.0		
<b>Total</b>		<b>2,592.0</b>		

## 8 Creditors and accruals

	Amounts falling due within one year		Amounts falling due after more than one year	
	2015	2014	2015	2014
	£	£	£	£
Trade creditors	11,689	12,861		
Accruals and deferred income	960	960		
<b>Total</b>	<b>12,649</b>	<b>13,821</b>		

## 9 Movements of major funds

	Fund balances brought forward	Incoming resources	Outgoing resources, Transfers	Gains losses	Fund balances carried forward
	£	£	£	£	£
Tangible Assets Funds	329,034	103,900			432,934
<b>Total Funds</b>	<b>329,034</b>	<b>103,900</b>			<b>432,934</b>

## **ANNEX: OPERATIONAL ROLES AND TASKS**

SARA is a multi-disciplinary volunteer search and rescue organisation, and is the designated rescue service for an area of over 20,000 km<sup>2</sup> on and around the Severn. It provides:

- Lifeboat cover for large parts of the Rivers Severn, Wye, Usk and the Bristol Avon\*
- Cliff rescue, particularly for the lower Wye Valley climbing areas including Symonds Yat
- Mud rescue
- Swift water and flood rescue
- Land Search
- Mountain Rescue

SARA currently operates from six bases, at Newport, Chepstow (Beachley), Sharpness, South Gloucester, Tewkesbury and Kidderminster (Wyre Forest). The need for SARA is increasing with more callouts evident year on year. The variety and range of callouts is also increasing. Typical incidents involve boats or persons in difficulty on one of the rivers SARA cover, but also searches for missing persons, animal rescue and flood relief are also becoming common.

### **Lifeboats and Mud Rescue**

SARA is the designated rescue service for the Rivers Severn, Wye and Usk. The SARA lifeboats, based at Beachley and Sharpness are tasked by HM Coastguard, largely in response to 999 calls.

The River Severn below Gloucester is used for around 350 commercial ship transits per year and the lower Wye around 150. The Severn also has over 500 registered leisure craft transits between Gloucester and Sharpness alone each year, and many more that are not counted. The tidal range on the Severn at Beachley, and on the Wye at Chepstow, is 15 metres (the second highest in the World!), which means that the river changes within a few hours from a wide expanse of deep water, to narrow shallow channels weaving through extensive sandbanks.

In addition the tidal current on the Severn reaches 12 knots; this can lead to very turbulent river conditions in even a moderate wind. Most of the way to Gloucester the riverbed is very broad, with a narrow and winding navigable channel, marked with numerous buoys, beacons and transits. The margins of all the tidal rivers have wide and thick mudbanks below the high-tide levels, and in places the exposed mud leads out to rocky islands at low tide.

Typical incidents for SARA include vessels grounding, or losing power hence requiring urgent assistance to avoid grounding. People have been rescued from islands or ledges where they were being cut off by the tide, or actually plucked from the mud. On other occasions boats, and other floating hardware, are broken loose by the water and drift with the fast currents, and have to be recovered. On average lifeboats are launched operationally around once a week (50-60 launches per year).

The SARA lifeboats area also features several high bridges – notably the M48 Severn

Bridge but also the A48 in Chepstow and several in Newport. SARA is often called out to a 'person at risk' on a bridge. The majority, but sadly not all, are resolved directly by the Police. However, a lifeboat is always launched so as to be ready. Recoveries are therefore not uncommon, but SARA has successfully rescued people from the water below a bridge. In 2015 there were 10 such bridge-related callouts.

\*SARA's declared area of lifeboat operations, for which it is tasked by HM Coastguard, is the Severn, north from a line between Newport and Clevedon to Maisemore Weir near Gloucester, and the tributary rivers Wye (to Bigsweir Bridge), Usk (to the M4 Bridge) and the Avon (to Bristol Docks). If required in exceptional circumstances, SARA Lifeboats 1 and 20 can extend beyond this area, using a re-fuelling stop at Newport, to operate north of a line from Barry to Weston Super Mare.

### **Land Search and Mountain Rescue**

SARA provides land search capabilities in support of the Police and is part of the South West England Rescue Association (SWERA). SARA has signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) in place with the Police Forces for Gloucestershire, Herefordshire & Worcestershire, the West Midlands, West Mercia and Warwickshire. These Police Forces request SARA support for 'Missing Person' searches in their respective areas, and teams from the various SARA Stations work together as appropriate to the search area location.

Such missing person searches can range in duration from less than an hour to spanning several days, and may become 'recovery' rather than rescue operations. SARA is able to deploy one of its two vehicle-based 'Mobile Incident Control Units' (ISUs) to support such searches and other operations; searches are managed from the ISU, which is the focus for liaison with the Police and other agencies. SARA's MoUs with the Police are to assist with any search, in any terrain, for a vulnerable missing person - so it could even be an urban search if required.

SARA is also a member of Mountain Rescue England and Wales (MREW). Mountain Rescue (MR) involves search as much as it does technical rescue and casualty care; in principle, this could be anywhere. Generally, MR teams deploy into mountainous environments (or at least challenging ones), so in the SARA area this would include the Wye Valley, Forest of Dean, Wyre Forest or Cleeve Hill.

In addition all neighbouring MR teams back each other up, so SARA is considered a backup for Longtown MR Team, and other teams in the Brecon Beacons. One example in recent years was an extensive search around Machynlleth; SARA did not deploy as many other MR teams did, but was put on high alert to back fill for any jobs in these teams' areas.

### **Cliff Rescue**

SARA Beachley is a specific base for the Cliff Rescue in the Lower Wye Valley, where the cliffs around Wyntours Leap, Symonds Yat and other walls are a popular destination for climbers of all abilities. It is estimated that there are 3,000-4,000 climber-days per year in the Lower Wye Valley. There are also a number of disused quarries in the area, in which accidents involving non-climbers happen.

SARA has an MoU with Gloucester Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS) for effecting cliff

rescue operations, and an increasingly close relationship with South Wales FRS (some of the cliffs are on the Welsh side of the Wye). The SARA rope rescue training is intentionally to Fire and Rescue specification and standards to facilitate interoperability.

There is a further close relationship with Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group (GCRG), which also has rope rescue trained personnel and relevant equipment, which are available as required. Conversely SARA is available to provide surface support to cave rescue operations, and indeed is integral to the contingency plans for caves such as at 'Otters Hole' in the Wye Valley.

Rope rescue operations are thankfully rare, but joint exercises are conducted with both the FRS and GCRG.

### **Swift Water and Flood Rescue**

Swift Water is defined as 'that moving fast enough to produce sufficient force to present a life and safety hazard to a person entering it'. Operations in 'swift water' are referred to as 'SRT' tasks and include life-saving rescue. However, due to the time-sensitive nature of water incidents these are often search and if necessary recovery operations. Their initiation is often by a combination of Police, FRS or Coastguard. Dependent on the water concerned, a small boat may be deployed, or a floating platform, in addition to crew directly in shallow water. SARA has the ability to launch such small boats in almost all rivers, with no requirement for slipway or road access to the riverbank. Such small boats are referred to as 'Rescue' boats; SARA prefers rigid rescue boats to reduce the risk of punctures from the use of inflatables.

SARA Swift Water crew are qualified as 'Swift Water and Flood Rescue Technicians', which is the national standard. The Swift Water Teams are also able to deploy on flood rescue operations nationally, as 'Type B' (ie volunteer) Flood Response Teams. DEFRA, through the National DEFRA Flood Rescue group, coordinate the 'Type B' Flood Response Team deployments nationally. SARA has 2 declared teams of 7, shared between its 4 Stations, which need to be ready for deployment anywhere in the country. SARA has a proven track record of deploying around the UK on such incidents including Essex (2014), Devon (2014) and Yorkshire (2015/16).

### **First Aid and Casualty Care**

All SARA crew are trained, at minimum, in basic first aid. A number of SARA crew are further qualified to the much higher level of 'Casualty Care' as defined by MREW. In addition a number of crew are professional paramedics, nurses or serving as Community First Responders.

First aid equipment is carried during all searches and in all SARA vehicles; depending on the nature of the operation, equipment such as Oxygen, portable defibrillators, back- and neck-stabilization boards may be taken into the field.

### **Callouts**

SARA Crew receive 'callouts' through a combination of dedicated Pagers and through SMS messages. In 2015 SARA Beachley alone deployed on 47 separate tasks, including 43 lifeboat deployments and 13 x land tasks— some callouts requiring a mix

of capabilities. At least 17 people were directly rescued by SARA (i.e. not counting the ones rescued by other agencies whilst SARA stood by), and 6 boats were recovered or secured.

### **Education and Training Provision**

SARA provides training and education through a variety of routes. These include:

1. Emergency Services Training. For the Emergency Services, SARA provides lifeboat training. For example SARA Beachley has an ongoing relationship with the Great Western Hospitals NHS Trust to provide structured, water-based rescue training for members of their Hazardous Area Response Teams (HART). This provides specialist knowledge, training and experience of working with boats in the estuarial waters of the Bristol Channel.
2. School visits. The SARA Stations frequently host visits from local primary schools, Scouts and Guides Units, etc. These are designed to be educational as well as fun, informing young people of the dangers of the water and other aspects of the local area of which they may be unaware.
3. Outreach activities. SARA frequently participates in relevant 'community outreach' activities such as the Drowning Awareness Weeks, again providing education about the avoidance of risks as well as information concerning SARA and other emergency Services.

### **Event Safety Cover**

SARA also provides safety and first aid cover to local outdoor-based events, generally sports related. These are usually events which involve water, and/or off-road running, such as the Monmouth Raft Race and Aquathlon, Reddich Iso-Man Triathlon, Offa's 'Orror and Devauden running races. SARA undertakes this role for several reasons:

1. To support the local community. SARA has historically provided this service at a discount to the notional cost, in order to facilitate and support these local events to a greater extent than alternative organisations would be able to. The number of such races and events supported continues to rise, as local organisations realise the capabilities which SARA can bring to their events.
2. To raise SARA's profile. For many members of the public spectating, this is an excellent opportunity to see SARA in action and contributes to raising funds both directly and indirectly. SARA is usually paid for providing the service, albeit at hugely discounted rates for community groups to enable these to be viable, but for many members of the public spectating, this is an excellent opportunity to see SARA in action.
3. To put SARA's skills into play 'in the field' and provide real-world experience for the crew.

### **Typical Rescue Case: Sharpness Station's Rescue of 'Whale II'**

A typical incident involved the 14 tonne 36 foot motor vessel 'Whale II' with three persons on board. The vessel left Sharpness Dock early on the tide and was attempting to punch ahead against incoming seven knot tidal flow. Eventually the engines on the vessel overheated and the vessel suffered engine failure. She was immediately driven back toward Sharpness by the speed of the tide and was driven under the South Pier of the Docks where she was pinned against the pier by the tide.

SARA Lifeboat 2, The Dave Moore launched and was on scene within seven minutes of the tasking and laid alongside the Whale II ready to take her crew off to safety. One crew member was put on board the casualty vessel to prepare the vessels crew for transfer on to the lifeboat if necessary.

The lifeboat stood alongside the casualty for almost forty minutes and when the Coxswain judged the attempt could be made, the tow commenced. Timing was critical as there is no slack water at Sharpness at the top of the tide with the ebb commencing whilst there is still some flow on.

Despite the weight of the casualty vessel and its position under the Pier, the lifeboat was able to tow the casualty vessel free, and tow it in to the safety of Sharpness Dock. The vessel and her crew were saved due to the speed and actions of the lifeboat crew.

