

## 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 2025 SARA conducted 112 different operations.

### Operational News

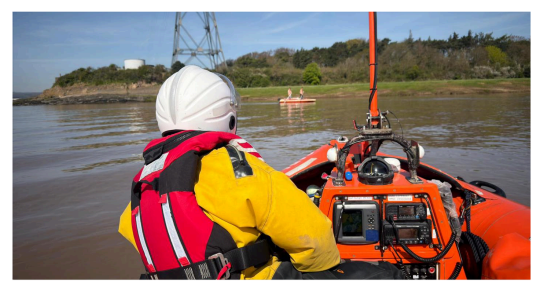
All of our rescue disciplines have been busy already this year. Inevitably, the rescue that got the TV coverage was that of a spaniel called 'Bracken', stuck on a cliff at Sedbury. SARA Lifeboat 1 is away having new engines fitted, but SARA 3 has been out frequently – two of her callouts are described inside.

Throughout March, the land and inland water teams were heavily involved in a long search for a man missing from the Coleford area. Teams deployed on 10 days, and sadly his body was eventually found in the River Wye. During the same period there was also a search in Lydney (he was found safe) and near Cheltenham (sadly also found in a small river).

We have also qualified new members of the land team (see inside) and the rope team, participated in a terrorist attack response exercise, sent several batches of crew to train with the Coastguard Helicopter or to a week of winter skills training in the Cairngorms, and more. Read on...



Search Control in the Forest of Dean



SARA Lifeboat 3 goes to a broken down boat



Cards from Monmouth Schoolchildren



At St Athan (everyone loves a helicopter)

## Lifeboat Operations

Rarely does a week pass without the SARA Beachley lifeboat crew being callout out, and this Spring has been no exception. Two of our callouts came during training or maintenance sessions, which is not so common.

One February Sunday morning, during training we were tasked in response to an activated EPIRB\* in the Bristol Channel. SARA 3 was still on the water so they made way immediately to begin a search. RNLI Portishead and RNLI Penarth were also tasked along with the Coastguard Helicopter Rescue 387.

Updated information led to the search being focused closer to the Portishead shoreline, and the EPIRB was found discarded in a wet bin - it had been activated by the water in the bin!

A few Sundays later, some crew heard a commotion on the slipway. On investigation they discovered a small RIB had suffered engine failure while preparing to recover at the Beachley slipway.

A jet ski was already trying to help; in liaison with the Coastguard the SARA crew launched SARA 3 and got alongside the drifting vessel.

The jet ski had also broken down, so they towed it back to safety and returned for the drifting vessel - which had managed to restart its engine but then ran out fuel. They towed it back too, so it could be safely recovered.



SARA Lifeboat 3 returns from the EPIRB search, after over 4 hours on the water

\*Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon

### Cymru Kitchens

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## Land Recruit Training

The journey for myself, Adam, Ben, Duncan, James, Kelab, Lee and Nikki began in May 2025 with an assessment day at New Fancy, in the Forest of Dean, quickly followed by our first day of training in June. Training that I might add has been quite intense to say the least.

From the outset, the course was both demanding and incredibly rewarding. We were introduced to a wide range of essential skills from navigation and search techniques, to missing person behaviour. Plus steep ground awareness, water first responder training, and the other 12 categories listed on my revision checklist for Derrick's famous Final Exam.

Alongside this, our team developed in many ways. Particularly with skills such as radio comms, note-taking, scene management, and first aid. Each session not only built our technical abilities but also our confidence, competence and understanding of the role needed to be a land search technician within SARA. It also helped us to develop personally, conquering some fears, working with others and looking introspectively to improve.



One of the most standout aspects of the training was the opportunity to work alongside such experienced and professional operational staff. Their knowledge, patience, and willingness to share real-world insight were inspiring. Learning from people who used these skills to save lives (including the occasional dog) reinforced just how vital teamwork, calm decision-making, and trust are in an operational environment.

I want to say a huge thank you to my fellow recruits. The support, encouragement, and friendships formed made even the toughest days enjoyable. Working together, learning together, and supporting each other has become a defining part of my experience, and I was genuinely grateful to be part of such a committed and positive group.

Simon Betts

## Multi-Agency Estuary Conference

In February we hosted a multi-agency forum in Beachley, discussing ways of working together better in our lifeboat area on the Severn Estuary area. We regularly attend such forums in England and in Wales, but there is no regular forum for the different organisations on each side of the Severn Estuary to get together.

Representatives of each of the Police and Fire services, Coastguard, the emergency helicopter services and others attended. We had a small series of excellent presentations, and plenty of time for discussions following which some useful actions were agreed.

Many thanks to 1 Rifles for making a facility available.



## Ron and Chris

We are honoured to recognise Ron Harris for an incredible 45 years of service and Chris Taylor for an amazing 25 years of service. Ron and Chris were each awarded a certificate in appreciation of their dedication and unwavering commitment.



Thank you  
Ron and Chris!



## Supporting Cave Rescue

In March we joined Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group (GCRG) as part of one of their practice rescues, helping to carry the exercise casualties out from the cave entrance to 'surface control'. There are a good number of caves and mines in the Forest of Dean where we might have to do this for real if there was a rescue from underground.



Two of our Search Controllers also attended one of the 'Table Top Exercises' which GCRG ran, simulating a rescue from the newly much-extended Redhouse Land Swallet Cave system. We also joined a comms recce of various surface locations. A rescue from one of the far reaches of this cave could easily last for 48 hours or longer, and would be a major logistic effort involving cavers from across the country. SARA would support this rescue in various ways, and it's good to be prepared.

## Coastguard Audit

The SARA Lifeboats are a 'Declared Facility' to HM Coastguard. We declare 5 inshore lifeboats 2 each at Beachley and Sharpness and 1 at Newport. This facility is the subject of a formal agreement, and HM Coastguard visit each year to audit our compliance - so that they can be assured that when they call us out, we can respond to the standard required.

In February we had the 2026 annual audit visit. We are delighted to have passed, and to have provided the MRCC Commander Matt Nicholas with a very positive impression.

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## New Carpets!

Our headquarters building in Beachley has been in need of refurbishment for some time

So recently we asked for help in replacing the old and worn out carpets in our training room, control room, crew room and stairs. We had a fantastic local response which means we now have brand new carpeting throughout.

Everyone in the crew has commented on how excellent it looks and how much better our building is looking. This is thanks to:

Manor Carpets and Flooring

Phoenix Flooring Limited

Kiely Carpets

Paul Harding

They each generously donated the carpet and their fitters' time to lay the new flooring, making the building look fantastic!



## Fundraising Concerts

This Spring we have had two wonderful concerts to raise valuable funds.

In February The Livestock Davies Band and Kings of Caerleon put on an evening of great music. Many thanks to them and to Chepstow Club for hosting the event.



Then in April, the Caldicot Male Voice Choir and Chepstow and Usk Singing Club performed a wonderful choral concert they at St Mary's Priory, also to raise funds for SARA.

SARA is Caldicot Male Voice Choir's charity of the year and we are very grateful!



## Madrid Half Marathon

Huge thanks and congratulations to Alfie, Arthur, Iwan, Lewis, Luke, Owain and Tom, who ran the Madrid Half Marathon in March.

They chose to run in memory of their friend Joseph Bellamy, from Caldicot, who sadly died in the River Severn just over a year ago. In doing so they have raised almost £3,500 for SARA, an amazing sum!



## Thank You!

Thank you to all our supporters who have visited our stands at Tesco, Chepstow Garden Centre or any of the other places and events we have attended. Your support is very much appreciated!!

**Diary Date**  
**Chepstow Duck Race - Sat 8 Aug**

SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association) is a Registered Charity CIO in England & Wales No: 1193634  
Registered Address: The Lifeboat & Rescue Station, Beachley Road, Chepstow NP16 7HH