

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

The team had been busy this summer with callouts - several of which coincided with Sunday training!

One July Sunday morning we became aware that West Mercia Police were concerned for a lady missing from the Droitwich area and thought likely to be in the Lower Wye Valley. Team members, some en route to Sunday morning training, checked local car parks for her vehicle - before long one of our land team Search Party Leaders spotted her car, and then found the lady concerned. He was joined by one of our Remote Rescue Medical Technicians who also lives locally; they waited with her until an ambulance arrived.



The following Sunday saw a lifeboat towing exercise, conducted jointly with our colleagues from RNLI Portishead. We had a great session, using our SARA Lifeboats 1 and 7 and their Atlantic 85. As the crew were washing off the boats we received a callout from the Coastguard to assist a 19ft power boat that had suffered an engine failure and was drifting upstream of Chepstow Castle. The crew quickly re-launched SARA Lifeboat 1, and soon found the casualty vessel. She was then towed back to Beachley where the owners and Chepstow Coastguard helped to recover it.

We have attended missing person searches in Gloucester, Painswick, Cirencester and Lydney, plus one in the Forest of Dean on yet another Sunday morning, and we supported Wiltshire Search and Rescue with a large search at Sutton Benger, near Chippenham. And we have conducted a couple of rope rescue operations.

Alongside all this the team has been training hard and raising funds, see inside for some examples!

The land team ran an Assessment Day for new recruits in June, as a result of which 7 new trainees started their journey at the start of July. They've been learning how to manage casualties and stretchers, and the basics of missing person search. More info on their training progress in the next newsletter!



Land Search Vehicles from across SARA,
at a callout in Gloucester in June



The SARA Newsletter is sponsored by Cymru Kitchens www.cymrukitchens.com



Jet Ski Rescues

On the last Saturday afternoon in July, to show our appreciation for the support given by Chepstow Town Council and Caldicot Male Voice Choir we invited the Chepstow Mayor, some of the councillors, and members of the Choir to Beachley Station for a series of VIP trips on SARA Lifeboat 1.

We were half way through washing down after the VIP trips when we were alerted to a broken-down jet ski. We notified the Coastguard and relaunched SARA 1, quickly located the jet ski and towed it back to the slipway.

Then at around 9:20pm, we were paged by HM Coastguard to assist a (different) jet ski that had become stranded on the Hen and Chickens rocks close to Beachley.

The rider had experienced engine problems and had drifted with the tide onto a particularly hazardous section of rocks, out of sight from the slipway. The falling tide had left the jet ski firmly stranded on exposed rocks, making immediate recovery impossible. Working alongside Chepstow Coastguard, the rider was safely assisted across the thick mud back to shore.



Lifeboat crew met back at Beachley station around 1.15am and eventually when the water had risen sufficiently, SARA lifeboat 7 was launched and towed the jet ski back to the slipway. They finally left to go home around 3.30am, tired but happy with a good outcome.

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Rope Rescue Training

In May a small team from SARA attended the first national Mountain Rescue Rope Rescue 'Exchange Learning and Improving' (ELI) Event. This was organised by the Peak District Region, and held at a JCB-owned quarry near Stoke.

3 Teams set up alongside each other, to rescue one (dummy) casualty each up a cliff, with another team watching (and in our case helping to haul), and then we swapped over and watched them. Plus there were some trade stands, and lunch from the Rapid Relief Team.

And then one hot Thursday evening in July the SARA Rope Team hosted the annual joint training exercise with Gloucestershire Fire & Rescue Service (GFRS), at Woodcroft Quarry. Some of the SARA team members had just been stood down from the Painswick callout.

Mixed teams from SARA and GFRS tackled two scenarios, of casualties needing to be raised up cliffs in a stretcher. Each one used a high directional frame, with SARA's Larkin Frame and GFRS's 'Arachnapod'. The scenarios were run slowly, with the emphasis on getting to know each others' people and equipment.



Both of these proved very useful exercises. By and large we all work in similar ways, but we can always pick up tips and ideas. Practising working with the GFRS team always pays dividends when we come to work together.

Launch Tractor Emily

One Friday in June we held a small event at SARA Beachley to unveil and 'christen' the new tractor, which SARA long-time member and coxswain Chris Taylor has been working hard to customise for a number of months.

Guests of honour were the family of Emily, who tragically was lost in the River Severn; they raised much of the funds for the new tractor and the tractor is named Emily in her memory.

SARA CEO Mark Carwardine gave a short introduction to SARA, and then Mary Miller made the main speech. Mary led the fundraising for the tractor and the shed – she has now moved away to the north of Scotland but returned to see the new tractor. Finally then Mark christened the tractor in the nautical tradition, with a spray of bubbly.



We also welcomed a number of our other supporters, and showed them around the SARA station if they had not visited before.

The new tractor is not on service yet, as we are awaiting the necessary pre-requisites for the new 'Launch Tractor Shed' to be built – watch this space! In the meantime the familiar red tractor (which Chris also helped to customise and maintain) is soldiering on, and you will see it launching lifeboats for a few more months yet.

Wild Wye SwimRun #5

In July we held our 5th Wild Wye SwimRun race. We had to change the start of the course because of the issues with the Wye Bridge, so that meant one less hill for the runners!

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us, for what is the favourite race of the year for many people. Whether you swam the Wye or crossed by boat, we hope you enjoyed a brilliant day on the trails!

Thanks to their support, we raised an incredible £1,850 for SARA. Every penny helps our volunteers continue providing search and rescue across the region.



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Thank You!

Thank you to all our supporters who have visited our stands in recent months! Your support is very much appreciated!!

Special thanks to Caldicot Male Voice Choir and to the Mayor of Chepstow, for adopting SARA as their chosen charities this year!

Curry Night Sat 10 Oct!

Join us for a delicious curry in Chepstow Drill Hall, on Sat 10 Oct, in partnership with Marmalade House Chepstow.

More information on our Facebook Page soon!

Fitness Test Challenge

The Great SARA Fitness Test Challenge is on Sunday 1 November! Join us at Mallards Pike Lake, to take on the annual SARA fitness test, an 8km route, carrying a 10kg backpack.

Can you beat 52 mins? Or you can pay a little more and leave the backpack behind. This challenge is open to brisk walkers and runners.

Entries open soon!



Set up a Monthly Donation!

SARA depends on donations
A small monthly donation would help us immensely
Please visit sara.enthuse.com and follow the links there

Or just set one up from your Online Banking
We are at 30-91-89 ; 00365745

Golf Day

Spaces are still available for our Golf Day on 7 October - book early to avoid disappointment! Please visit tinyurl.com/SARAGolfDay2026.

SARA
Severn Area Rescue Association

7th October, 2026

4 BALL COMPETITION FOR THE SARA GOLF CUP AT THE PRESTIGIOUS ST. PIERRE OLD COURSE CHEPSTOW

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To raise money to replace the SARA Flood Boat

More information at and <https://www.sara-rescue.org.uk>

SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association) Registered Charity CIO in England & Wales No: 1193634 HQ: The Lifeboat & Rescue Station, Beachley Road, Chepstow NP16 7HH
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Donate Page QR Code

For information about supporting SARA, visit sara-rescue.org.uk/donate or use the QR code



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