Severn Area Rescue Association

SARA

Autumn 2026

Beachley Lifeboat & Rescue Station

Lifeboats; Land Search; Cliff, Mud, 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. We conduct inland search and rescue across Gloucestershire. In 2025 SARA conducted 112 different operations.

An Operational Search Dog!

Towards the end of October, SARA announced that our first search and rescue dog had graduated from trainee to OPERATIONAL status! The biggest of congratulations to Winnie and handler Mark, from SARA Beachley, on passing a rigorous assessment to become an air scenting search dog team.



Assessors from the National Search and Rescue Dog Association (NSARDA) put them through their paces in 5 different areas over 3 days across Gloucestershire, testing their abilities to locate hidden people in vast areas of demanding terrain. The success at their assessment is the culmination of three years of rigorous training, and the four-legged hero is now on the callout list, ready to deploy 24/7 as part of a SARA team in finding missing and vulnerable people.

A single search dog team can search dense woodland and other areas in a fraction of the time it takes a human team, making them an invaluable asset.

SARA's Director of Rescue Operations Martin Holloway commented "Having our first operational search dog team is an important step change in our ability to find missing people. I've been privileged to watch them develop across their demanding training period and I'm really excited to see them out on live searches.

"This is a major achievement for the dog and handler, and I am so grateful to the training team and all the volunteers who have been 'dogsbodies' over the last three years to get them to where they are now. I am confident that Mark & Winnie will be joined by other dog teams soon, as we have a number who are well advanced in their training".

SARA Dog Unit Leader Kathy Donaldson added "We would like to give heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to the team's success, those that have hidden for the dogs to find, dog team supports and landowners who have given permission for training on their land."



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Callouts

In August SARA provided the Water Rescue Capability for South Wales Fire Service. The Fire Service had requested our support, along with that of fire services from across England and of other volunteer organisations, as they were hugely stretched dealing with the extensive and persistent wildfires.

A rotating set of boat teams from SARA stations at Newport, Beachley, Sharpness and Tewkesbury, was based at Cardiff Gate Fire Station for a period of over 72 hours. This released firefighters to deal with the wildfires, whilst maintaining their statutory requirement to respond to rescue calls.

During this time we responded to one person in the water in Cardiff and another in Newport; both were resolved with everyone safe.



Over the summer we attended to several climbers fallen on the cliffs at Wintours Leap, fortunately none too seriously. One was lucky enough to get a ride in SARA Lifeboat 1 back to an ambulance at Beachley. We have also been tasked to a series of missing people across Gloucestershire, so far all with a good outcome.



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Regional Training Day

On Saturday 10 October, SARA Beachley hosted a Training Day for volunteer Search and Rescue teams from across the region, at Livox Quarry near Tintern.

80 or so members of the different organisations within the 'South West England Rescue Association' (SWERA), which includes SARA, participated in a series of workshops throughout the day. Based on their submitted preferences, there were workshops on Incident Command, Casualty Handling, Rope Rescue, Water Rescue, and Land Search. There was a Cave Rescue Stretcher Challenge plus the opportunity to visit an actual cave in the Forest of Dean for an intro to real cave rescue. This was an excellent opportunity to work across teams, and for members to learn new skills.



Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group, Prusik Rescue and RE-ACT helped to run the sessions, and the Rapid Relief Team (RRT) supplied wonderful food.

We are very grateful to the landowner for allowing us and SARA to use Livox Quarry for training, as it offers many possibilities within a small area. It was fantastic to see members of nearly all of the SWERA member teams there, and the feedback has been universally positive.



Cardiff Whitewater

Twice in October we were invited to days of flood rescue training organised by the Avon & Somerset Local Resilience Forum. Swiftwater & Flood Rescue-qualified members of our stations at Tewkesbury, Upton and Newport, as well as Beachley attended.

Rescuers from Fire, HM Coastguard and several volunteer teams like ours were put into mixed teams and worked through a set of skills workshops in the demanding conditions there.

Once again the lovely Rapid Relief Team (RRT) were on hand to provide refreshments, even if hard swimming straight after a big lunch was a challenge too far for some!



Curry Night

We would like to say a huge thank you to the Mayor of Chepstow for choosing us as her charity of the year. The first charity event of the year was a Curry Night, which was a great success - raising around £1,800 for SARA.

Guests at The Drill Hall on Saturday 10 October enjoyed a three-course Ceylon Curry buffet from Marmalade House Cafe and Tea Rooms, live music from Gate 7 and a raffle, all supporting our project to replace and refurbish our rescue boats.

Thank you to everyone who came along and to all who helped make it happen.



Golf Day

Congratulations to 'The Showground Shankers', from the David Broome Event Centre, who won the prestigious Winners Cup at our 3rd annual Golf Day at St. Pierre on Wednesday 7 October. 19 teams competed, and once everyone had finished there was dinner, with a raffle and an auction; top prize being a voucher generously donated by The Whitebrook.



James from The Showground Shankers said "We are all still buzzing from the day. Can't wait for next year!"

This year's event raised around £6,200. It was once again organised by Mary Miller, a SARA lifeboat helm, but it was her final one as she and her husband have now relocated to the north of Scotland, to be close to family. We are very grateful to Mary for creating such a great event, to St Pierre's for their very generous support, and to the various local sponsors, Acrow, Cymru kitchens, Magnera, Monnow eye Care, Ferrino, Chepstow Racecourse, Oddjobs, The Showground and Freight International

The 2027 SARA Golf Day will be on Tuesday 14 September – more information available soon!



SARA



Fitness Test Challenge

The Great SARA Fitness Test Challenge is now on Sunday 17 January! 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

Sign up at: **tinyurl.com/SARAFitnessTest26**

Devauden Races 2027

Also, the lovely Devauden Races will be back on May Bank Holiday Monday, 3 May 2027.

There are 5k and 10k races for adults, a 2.4k route for ages 6+, all on the trails of Chepstow Park Woods, plus and a 60m dash for little ones at Race HQ,

We will be releasing a limited number of early bird entries later this year. If you would like priority access, you can register your interest at:

sara.eventrac.co.uk/e/devauden-races-14795

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

Coming Soon

We'll be selling Christmas Trees at SARA Beachley on the weekend of 5 & 6 December.

Plus please watch our social media, or contact **beachley.fundraiser@sara-rescue.org.uk**, for more information on:

SARA Christmas Raffle

Murder Mystery Night 12 Feb

Tidenham Church Abseil 15 May

Thank You!

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

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

Thank You!



And finally, who could resist these lovely refreshments?? Afternoon cakes now, as well as breakfast & lunch, from our friends at RRT!

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

SARA (Severn Area Rescue Association) is a Registered Charity CIO in England & Wales No: 1193634
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