



Derbyshire
Fire & Rescue Service
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| Press Release

Press release from **Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service** and **Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Authority**

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13 AUGUST 2020

DANGERS AT WELL KNOWN AREA OF RIVER DERWENT – PEBBLE BEACH

Firefighters and police officers are re-issuing a warning to stay away from, and keep out of the River Derwent in Derby, specifically a well-known stretch of river in Alvaston, known locally as Pebble Beach.

The warning comes following a report on Facebook that a young boy got into difficulty in the river yesterday.

The Earl of Harrington's Angling Club Facebook page @EofHAC reports that yesterday a group of young boys had been playing football at the far end of Pebble Beach when one of the boys was swept down river. The Facebook page goes on to say, that as the boy was unable to swim he had to be rescued by a passer-by. The boy had been swept about two hundred yards from where he entered the river before he was rescued.

Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service Station Manager Mark Whitelaw said: "We have been made aware of an incident in the River Derwent yesterday where a young boy was rescued by a member of the public who was passing by.

"As the incident wasn't reported to emergency services, Firefighters didn't attend the scene, but this specific stretch of river is no stranger to our crews who have had to attend the area on many occasions over the years."

Since 2016, Firefighters have attended several incidents at Pebble Beach:

February 2016 – Young adult male in the water. Out of the water on arrival of crews.

May 2018 – Children playing in the water, one boy got into difficulty and was helped to the opposite river bank by a police officer. Firefighters assisted the police officer and boy to safety.

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Gavin Tomlinson MBA MIFireE
Chief Fire Officer / Chief Executive



July 2018 - Tragically a 25 year old man drowned after falling from the weir at Pebble Beach. He became trapped under the water by the strong currents.

October 2018 – Adult male in water. Out of water and in care of paramedics on arrival of Firefighters.

June 2019 – 11 year old girl slipped crossing the weir. Rescued by a passer-by before arrival of crews.

Station Manager Whitelaw went onto say: “We are aware that people visit this particular area of river when it’s hot as naturally lying stones reveal a beach like area. This makes the river appealing to families, children and even horse riders, but Pebble Beach is a really dangerous place to be.

“The water may appear to be calm, but it’s deep and hidden currents can soon sweep the strongest swimmer downstream and into danger. The weir is also a danger as sadly demonstrated by the tragic fatality in July 2018.

“With the hot weather continuing we know the river is a temptation, so I’d call on parents to talk to their children about the dangers of playing in, or close to any open water, but specifically this area of the River Derwent. I’d also ask anyone planning to visit the area, to keep away! There are plenty of lovely places to visit in Derbyshire that don’t pose the same dangers and risks that the river does.

“Thankfully on this occasion it has been reported that the young boy was helped to safety by a passer-by. I dread to think what would have happened if there hadn’t been anyone around to help the boy.”

Water safety – During the hot weather open water, such as rivers, reservoirs and quarries may seem enticing, but they can be extremely dangerous even for the strongest swimmer.

Swimming outdoors is completely different to a warm swimming pool. The cold water can cause your body to go into cold water shock which can quickly lead to drowning. The shock causes:

- muscle cramps – making it extremely difficult to swim
- breathing difficulties, causing panic and disorientation

Other dangers of open water include:

- Hidden strong currents.
- Fast flowing water - beware of locks and weirs.
- Deep water.
- Hidden dangers, such as rubbish and debris, this can trap, snag or cut.
- No lifeguards, most outdoor waterways do not have lifeguards.

ENDS