

OGA
EASTCOAST GAFFERS
BERWICK-ON-TWEED TO RAMSGATE

EASTCOASTER

Newsletter of the East Coast OGA



As Members think about a last sail of the season and laying up, this Autumn issue of Eastcoaster brings reports from the late Summer events including a very successful 2nd Gaffling Championship in the Lake District, a small boat event hosted by the Norfolk Wherry 'Albion' and a trip to the Netherlands.

Our Area remains very active and now extends from Ramsgate as far as the border with Scotland since the merger with our friends in the North East. As usual, this issue contains three featured boats and we hope to feature boats from further up the coast in future.

The EC membership is strong with new members joining every month. The interest in smaller boats is growing and reflected in our Programme. The Committee is working hard on the 2026 Events Calendar as we go to press and will be reporting on progress at the forthcoming Area AGM at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club, Saturday 8 November.

Thankyou to everyone for your contributions!

Cover photo: Six Gafflings race in the 2nd Annual Championships, Ullswater by Mary Gibbs

IN THIS ISSUE

- ◇ East Coast Area change
- ◇ Calendar: 2026
- ◇ Featured boats
- ◇ A young gaffer reports
- ◇ Summer Cruise 2025
- ◇ Ullswater Rally, 2025
- ◇ Norfolk wherry 'Albion' Rally
- ◇ Reeuwijk Rally
- ◇ RIP Mike Robertson
- ◇ EC Gaffers: online & in print

A warm welcome to NE OGA members

OGA President, Mike Beckett, notified Members of a planned merger between the NE and the EC areas in the Summer issue of Gaffers Log. A note for all Members will be published in the Autumn issue of Gaffers Log with full ratification of the merger finalised at the Association AGM on 31 January 2026.

Francis Mogg, NE Area President, has been invited to become Honorary Area Vice President. There will be a formal election at the EC Area AGM in November.

The East Coast Area Committee extends a warm welcome to all North East OGA members and hope that our programme of events will be of interest. We look forward to working towards ensuring a lively, active membership for the enlarged East Coast OGA Area from Ramsgate to Berwick-on-Tweed.



East Coast Calendar: 2025 - 2026

Your Committee has been working hard on the Events Programme for 2026. Outline plans will be available at the AGM. Stay updated online:
www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/east_coast_events.html

8 November: Area AGM, RHYC

Once again, we'll be at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club for our Area AGM and dinner. Meal booking closes 26 October, 2025.

2026

Your Area Committee is organising the Association AGM for 2026. It will be held in Harwich with plenty of activities and social opportunities apart from the meeting.

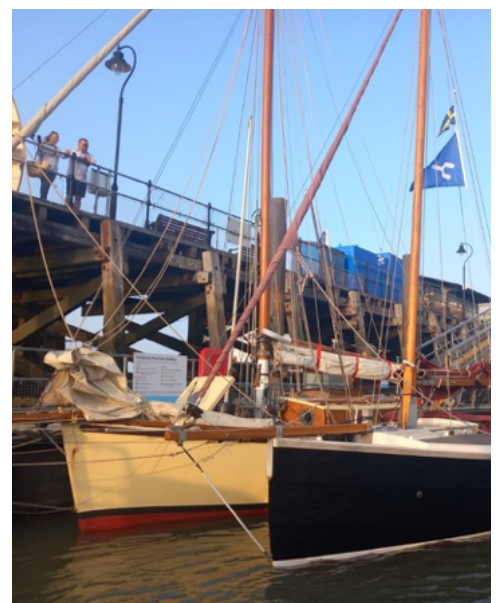
31 January - 1 February, 2026: Association AGM

Full details are published in the Winter issue of Gaffers Log; meanwhile, put the date in your diary for a great weekend of events here in the East Coast Area.

Online booking opens at the end of October.

Your Committee needs you!

We are seeking members to organise events. This does NOT involve attending numerous Committee meetings . . . just ideas for great events up and down our new extended Area. Please contact any member of the Committee with your suggestions - we look forward to hearing from you!



*Gaffers on the beach at Wrabness, 2025
 Photo: Beverley Yates*

*Halfpenny Pier, Harwich
 Photo: Beverley Yates*

*'Louisa' & 'Reverie' take berths at Harwich,
 2025 Photo: Marion Shirley*



Featured boats

We bring three more very different 'featured boats' this quarter. In August, Tom Strofton recounts his adventures with 'Caryta', 'Jan Blank' with Rik and Edith from the Netherlands is in September followed by new member, Paul Cook in October.

Please contact the Editor with ideas for boats to feature in 2026.

'Caryta'

Our featured boat for August is 'Caryta' (Careeter), a Tradewind 25' gaff cutter finished in 2002 by an ex RAF Engineer in his Scarborough garden. Over the past few years her new owner, Tim has been updating some of her systems. He's fitted AGM to LiPo with new solar panels and chargers etc., removed the propane and gone to an all electric galley. There's an electric outboard on the tender but he's retained the good old Yanmar 20 under the cockpit. With a new suit of sails and a hydrovane on the stern, she's ready for some adventures now that Tim has retired and has more time to go sailing.

I purchased 'Caryta' in Cardiff during the 2021 lockdown and after a few trials around Cardiff Bay, sailed her round Lands End calling at Lundy, Padstow, Newlyn, Falmouth and onwards to Burnham-on-Crouch Yacht Harbour, learning the gaff rigged foibles as I went. Since then I've sailed locally and done all the usual East Coast creek crawling made easy with 1.25m draft, and one or two longer passages to Harwich and Ostend. I mainly sail solo as my wife doesn't like boats that rock too much! Now I've retired, apart from some consultancy stuff, I decided to set off for a slightly more challenging summer cruise.

In mid-May I set off for Dover having the usual bumpy ride round the cliffs, quick overnighter and then on to Brighton before going into Hasler Marina in Pompey. After a brief stay I headed off to Guernsey to see my sister who lives there and waded through my brother-in-law's wine cellar for a few days. I timed it. Guernsey was celebrating 'Liberation day' with a large military vehicle parade and plenty of beer. Wind was a problem in terms of 'not enough' (this was to become a feature) and I had to grab opportunities as they came along. Later in May I spotted a wind window and left in the early evening doing nicely as I headed for Brest. All was going well until one of my furlers jammed, meaning I had to go onto the foredeck armed with a large screwdriver. It was getting dark, the seas had risen and I was somewhat over-canvassed running with the wind. The crash gybe when it came was hefty! As I came out from Guernsey, the wind had shifted. The shackle holding the mainsheet onto the boom exploded leaving it running free. I cautiously crawled to the cockpit from the bowsprit, dodging a boom that was doing its own thing and fortunately I had left a mooring line curled up in the cockpit. Having managed to lasso the boom I could winch it back into some semblance of order. The remains of the old shackle was totally jammed into the mount with age and nothing would shift it. I decided to reduce sail and head for Salcombe, only 60 miles

away rather than an unknown French port. After dodging pods of very fast moving cargo ships in the channel and thanking god for AIS I anchored in pitch black in Starehole Bay just outside Salcombe. I slept really well!

After a couple of days in Salcombe and judicious use of an angle grinder I had things back in shape. With everything working again I set off for the Bay of Biscay with a helpful wind and plenty of fresh rations onboard. All was going well and I soon slipped into the rhythm of solo sailing watch-keeping – 15 minutes eyes shut followed by one minute eyes on swivels – rinse and repeat. The dolphins kept me company for hours. I noticed that if I played ‘Tears for Fears’ on the speaker they would really start showing off – don’t ask me why! After three days the wind disappeared and I starting rocking from side to side, a lot! Another couple of days of this and I became bored and took a look at the chart. I had originally had thoughts about heading for the Azores but the high pressure plume seemed to be all consuming and I was conscious that I still had some work to come back to do in mid to late June. I decided that turning round and heading for Cork seemed like a better idea as the beer is good and the company would be lively. Trying to sail 400 miles with no wind is not easy and became tortuous. Taking another look at the chart I noticed the Scilly Isles were not far away. The decision made I motor sailed to St Mary’s arriving in the early afternoon. I was met by the friendly Harbour Master who guided me onto a buoy about 400 metres from the dinghy jetty. It was time to try out my tiny e-Propulsion Elite electric outboard which was superb, the perfect tool for the job. The next five days I pottered back and forth from the pub to the boat noiselessly and felt fully recharged by the sun. As there was literally no wind and the weather was hot, there were a number of sailing boats becalmed there and I soon made a number of friends as we explored and drank beer until it was time to head off. As soon as the wind forecast livened up we all scuttled about preparing our various craft for the next stage of our different adventures. I was easily the smallest and slowest boat there and the only gaffer. I slipped very early one morning whilst everyone else was still stacking up Z’s. I cut through the back of the island, set up the hydrovane and was soon hissing along at pretty much hull speed. I aimed for Salcombe again as I liked the breakfast in the Victoria Inn. The next 30 hours were pretty much the best sailing I’d ever had with a lovely steady NW wind pushing me along and the wind vane doing all the work. The other boats soon started popping up on the AIS and I watched them as they all overtook me, diving into the various harbours along the south coast or on to Newlyn, Falmouth and Fowey.

I did have some interesting interactions with fishing boats that seemed to delight in turning off their AIS and lights until I was right on them though, extraordinary! I had some mad French fisherman who followed me for hours, 300 metres off my stern, which was a bit bizarre. Next up was Salcombe to Weymouth with the usual excitement of the Portland Race to keep my pulse rate up a bit. The most taxing part of the whole trip was Weymouth to Lymington when St Aldhelm’s Head turned a tad nasty and gave me a proper going over. My timing wasn’t quite perfect and the wind against tide made me regret that. By the time I got to the Needles I was very wet and tired with water everywhere in the boat. It was chaos below with wet bedding etc., no sympathy required though, it was my own fault.



The wind accelerated to 35knots out of nowhere as I passed Hurst Castle. I was hanging on to the tiller until my arms felt like they were coming out of their sockets, at 10 knots speed over ground. It was a struggle to slow down, dodging the two ferries that conveniently crossed just in front of me as I entered the shallows at the entrance to Lymington. I somehow got it all squared away and then puttered through the whole marina to Town Quay, tied up, sorted out the boat and went to the pub to meet an old Army mate of mine.

The remainder of the trip back to Burnham was largely uneventful, although entering Dover via the West was rather exciting this time with standing waves and cross currents doing their best to ruin my day. All in all a really enjoyable trip with a few 'learning' moments and I certainly now have far more confidence in this tough little blue water cruiser of mine. I think the adage is that it's rarely the boat that gives in, it's the little bundle of skin, bone and nerve endings sitting on the back that wobbles first!

Words and photos: Tim Strofton

'Jan Blank'

Our featured boat for September is a regular participant in East Coast events based in the Netherlands. Dutch OGA member Rik Homan shares the story of her design, build and some of the places she's visited.

In 1991 a friend of Rik Homan bought a nice clinker build wooden lifeboat and asked Rik to make drawings of her as he intended to build luxurious motor launches in fibreglass. After about 200 boats of this type had been built, Rik started thinking about a sailing version. In 1993 Rik modified the design and acquired one hull to complete as a sailing version.

Due to other work in Rik's boatyard the hull was stored for many years. More drawings were made and he managed to make a slow start during a lull in work at the boatyard. It was not until 2014 that the boat was finally launched by Edith. She was named 'Jan Blank' after a similar boat belonging to Rik's uncle on which he had learned to sail.

The fibreglass hull is of good quality vinyl ester, the lapstrakes giving extra stiffness. The deck and cabin are made of good quality multiplex with gunwale and exterior in teak or mahogany. There is a teak deck on the cabin top, not the deck. The yellow cedar mast is hollow of with an invisible cover of epoxy and glass. Other spars are pine, re-using left-over materials when possible to reduce costs. The boat was designed for two people sleeping and staying on board for longer cruising. The board to board cabin gives ample space, with no centreboard casing as this is built partly into the keel and stays just under the floorboards. The engine is placed in the cockpit as a table, leaving the entrance free with only a step of less than one foot to the cabin floor. A large, asymmetric sliding hatch is provided giving an easy entrance. With the sprayhood on, there is just enough standing headroom at the galley.

The cutter rig gives a traditional look with gaff main, topsail, foresail and jib on a retractable bowsprit. The mast is short with easy lowering in a tabernacle, where it does not extend far beyond the rudder. The mast can be lowered or hoisted with a tackle on the foot of the mast, leading via a sheave in the





foredeck to an electric winch mounted under the foredeck. The winch has remote control to be able to correct possible jamming of lines. The gaff topsail extends the mast by 10 feet giving a much better performance in light winds. For easy reefing the main has a worm gear to roll the sail around the boom; for jib and foresail Rik made electric rollers using windscreen wiper motors. The Bruce anchor on a bronze roller has 50 m chain in the forepeak.

From the year after launch we sailed first in Holland, Zeeland and the Frisian Islands to test the boat. The following year Rik bought a trailer. With the shallow draft of 2 feet, the boat can easily be placed on the trailer, on a good steep slipway. The total weight of the boat is 1800 kg, so rather heavy, needing a 4-wheel drive car to launch without a crane. Under the floorboards in the cabin two legs are stored for use when drying out, with a stainless foldable foot. The backstay tackle is connected to the upper end of the leg; with this tackle the boat can be adjusted to stay upright.

Rik and Edith have travelled to several events for classic boats, such as la Semaine du Golfe, Sail Douarnenez, East Coast OGA, Isle of Wight Classics, but also cruised along the North and South coast of Brittany from Plymouth to the Scillies and from Stockholm to Mariehamn. The boat is proving to be much more seaworthy than expected and the reliable Beta marine diesel helps to avoid difficult situations.

Words & photos: Rik Homan

‘Capriccio’

Our featured boat for October is ‘Capriccio’, originally called ‘Wendy’, kept on the River Deben.

She was designed by Morgan Giles when he was just 24 years old. Over her long life, she has had many owners and each has slightly added and adapted her to suit their needs. Despite this, all the planking is original with a few sistered oak frames. The boat has been in and out of the OGA since the early 1970s, based on records in publications and her early Boat Register no., shown on her sail, 388. She’s reported to have taken part in events on the East Coast over her years of membership, including a third place in the East Coast Race, 1979 and Annual Summer Cruise this year.

She was built by Gordon Sinden, Fishbourne, Isle of Wight in 1912. Her construction is pitch pine carvel planking on oak bent frames, copper fastened with teak coamings and superstructure.

LOA: 28’

LWL: 23’

Beam: 7ft 8ins

Draft: 4ft.

Sinden kept her for his own use until 1924 when she was sold to Major A H Stuart, Southampton. Her next owner, (1930-37) was M Hackforth-Jones who installed auxiliary power in 1931 with a 2-cylinder petrol engine and converted her from sloop to cutter rig in 1933. She changed hands again in 1937 with A McDougall of Tring, Hertfordshire keeping her through the war years. In 1947 she was purchased by L F Kent, London who sold her to G West of Rochester, Kent in 1965 who kept her for ten years. Between 1976 and 1980 she was owned by Wendy Laycock, Huddersfield and listed for sale in the OGA Newsletter 1980 when she was kept at Pin Mill on the River Orwell:

“WENDY (388) Gaff Cutter, 42 tons I.M: 28'(+4'bspt) x 8' x 3'6". Built Sinden Bros, Fishbourne 1912. 1 double bunk, 1 single. 2 burner & grill cooker. Old main & 2 jibs. V. sound. New main, two jibs & beating genoa. Lies Pin Mill. £4000. Wendy Laycock, Ipswich, Suffolk.”

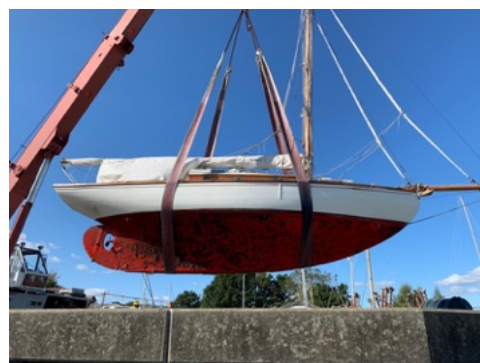
Just two years later, she's listed again for sale in the OGA Newsletter, by F S Evans, following a refit which includes a new engine. In the second advert, he reduces the price to £5,900 and notes a new address in Hampshire.

“Wendy (388) 28ft. cutter. Morgan Giles, 1912. Pitch pine on oak. New Volvo 7hp diesel just fitted. Extensive refit, new bunks. Echo sounder, compass, cooker, Blake WC etc., Good sails and new ghoster. Afloat Woodbridge. £6,950. F S Evans, Norwich.”

In the 1980s she came to the East Coast in the ownership of R. Parish who kept her on the River Deben at Woodbridge, selling her in 1987. She was renamed ‘Capriccio’ at this time. Brian and later Crispin Thomas, of Wivenhoe kept ‘Capriccio’ between 1987 and 1995 when she passed to J C Forrest, also of Wivenhoe. She has now returned to the River Deben, owned since 2019 by OGA member, Paul Cook. Her home port is Ramsholt on the River Deben.

She had a new mainsail made in 2022 by Ratsey & Lapthorn, designed by Mark Butler (ex James Lawrence Sails). Paul chose the Verona typeface for the OGA number 388 on her new sail. This typeface was invented in 1912, matching the date of her boat design.

Words and photos: Paul Cook



Young Gaffer report: Thomasina Mallett, Youth Fund Grant awarded

Thomasina Mallett, aged 18 was awarded a Youth Fund grant by the East Coast OGA to complete her Day Skipper Course in order to take more responsibility aboard 'Excelsior'. She has successfully completed the course and provides an illustrated article about her experiences.

Over the period of two months this summer, I had the incredible opportunity to complete my RYA Day Skipper theory followed by the practical course in Largs, Scotland, thanks to a grant from the East Coast OGA. The aim of taking the course was to improve my sailing skills, which I could then apply to traditional sailing boats such as 'Excelsior', a 1921 Lowestoft smack.

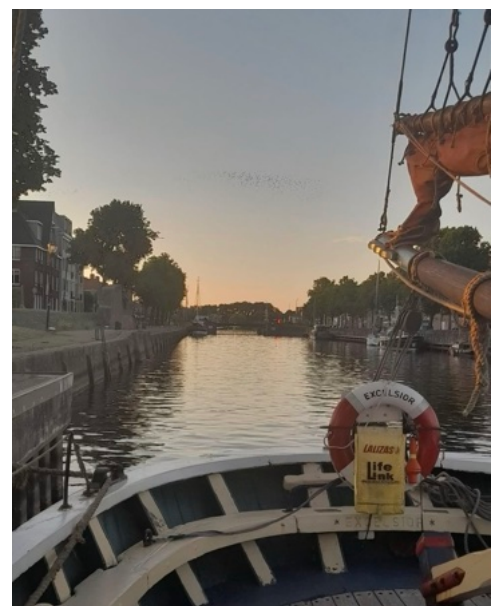
The five-day Day Skipper course starting in Largs, visiting Tarbert, the Isle of Bute and Rhu, introduced me to skippering modern yachts, which I had little experience in. I was onboard 'Perseus', a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 1999, which uses winches for all the ropes and could be controlled fully from the cockpit, already a massive difference to traditional sailing vessels. However, the differences did not change how much I enjoyed the sailing! I had the chance to be responsible for pilotage, passage planning, and handling the boat, which I found thrilling. Each of the five trainees had a turn to be skipper for a small passage over the week. I was to oversee the night watch which was exciting as I had to interpret all the lights and enter a port I had never been to on top of all the other factors a skipper must be aware of.

When I rejoined 'Excelsior' as a volunteer deckhand a few days later, I felt more confident in my sailing abilities. I had previously sailed as a trainee on 'Excelsior', 'Christian Radich' and 'Swan' of Shetland, which are all traditional sailing vessels, but this was first time as crew on any sailing vessel. I supported the sail training onboard 'Excelsior' for day sails and week-long school trips, and the delivery leg for the beginning of Tall Ship Races 2025. With my newfound confidence in the basics, I was able to focus on the sail handling of a traditional boat and sail training. I started to predict sail changes for the wind and our route, becoming more proactive in my role, getting our trainees prepared to do different jobs. It helped me to go from following the instructions to giving the instructions. I was learning the why to what we must do to sail effectively, efficiently, and safely.

Thank you to the OGA for supporting me, I have taken away more than a qualification from this opportunity! I would like to continue my sailing journey by collecting more qualifications hopefully I become good enough to pass my Yacht Master eventually.

Words: Thomasina Mallett

*Photos (from top):
Merlin Farrell
Graham Cross
Thomasina Mallett*



East Coast Summer Cruise 2025

When do you put a new (to you) Cornish Shrimper in the water on Wednesday and take off cruising on Friday? When it's the EC OGA summer cruise.

To be fair, I knew the engine and wiring were both good. I met 'Reverie' on the Halfpenny Pier, managed a sail in company to Orford Haven and my first time entry to the river Alde. All the buoys were visible and, following instructions to find the deep part, I was able to talk from the boat to people on the beach. Rafted with 'Reverie' in the Butley River, the kind crew dropped my mast to sort out issues occurring aloft. The next day we repaired to Slaughden, just south of Aldeburgh. A monsoon, involving a white-out of rain, struck just on arrival. Anchored boats were rearranging themselves and I was most grateful to raft alongside 'Hussar', securely attached to a buoy. Later, OGA members provided a tasty chilli in the welcoming Slaughden Sailing Club.

The next day, in better weather, a posse of boats floated up on the tide to Snape. All the smaller ones went aground and came off again. Larger vessels anchored near the church at Iken. The glorious Suffolk countryside echoes Benjamin Britten, the voices of barge skippers across the ages and Maltings staff hurriedly searching out cake since we arrived on a day different than expected. Tuesday was the day for a river race; up and down between Slaughden and Orford. Orford Sailing Club hosted a delightful evening barbecue. Wednesday saw a tour of the dramatic Orford Ness, the site of 20th century weapons tests, spectacularly rare grasses, a huge colony of brown hares and a cloud of ladybirds.

There followed serious discussion of tactics for the next day's Seaway Bells race from the river mouth to Harwich Harbour. At least one boat did actually leave at 0300 in the morning. Others motored down river to wait for depth. 'Louisa' the Shrimper tacked down river, motored whilst caught in an eddy, thought of going out, wasn't sure, then tagged along behind the bigger and deeper drafted 'Gilda' into a whirlwind and heavy shower. After that, we still weren't sure but eventually rounded all the marks and sailed the whole course. We spent the night in the civilisation of a marina at Suffolk Yacht Harbour and then sailed to Wrabness for a great beach barbecue. If 'Louisa' did go aground overnight, it wasn't for very long.

I made the last two nights of the 2024 cruise after an epic single-handed trip from Nieuwpoort in Belgium, via Ramsgate in my old boat, 'East Breeze'. I won a seamanship trophy. In 2025, I enjoyed the whole cruise in 'Louisa' and won a trophy for coming alongside at the RHYC despite a shortage of fenders. The organisers did a fantastic job and I thoroughly recommend the Summer Cruise.

Words: Marion Shirley

Photos (from top):

Edith van Dijk

Sarah Adie

Full reports, results and more photos on the website.



3 small boat events end the season

Ullswater Rally: 22 - 25 August 2025

Organised by the North West Area of the OGA this Rally was attended by several East Coast OGA members, towing their boats up to the Lake District.

Boats taking part in the event were all gaff-rigged but represented a wide range of design, rig and build: two Iain Oughtred designs, an Arctic Tern, 'Keria' and Willy Boat, 'Milly', six Gaffling 4.1s, two Post Boats, a Lune Whammel, a Deben lugger, 'Lulu', two smacks boats, 'Eureka' and 'Switha' and a Cornish Shrimper 19 'Eagle Owl'.

35 Gaffers began to gather at Ullswater Yacht Club on Friday 22 August 2025 for the eagerly anticipated North West OGA Ullswater Rally incorporating the second Gaffling 4.1 Championships. Six Gafflings were brought on trailers from Suffolk, Essex the North East and Arnside while other members arrived from Scotland, the South West and London to stay in camper vans, tents or local hostelries with and without boats. We were joined by two boats owned by OGA members based at the Ullswater Yacht Club. The weather forecast looked very promising and those in camper vans were directed to a large grassy field beside the lake. The Club provided excellent storage and launching facilities for all the boats and made us most welcome in the Clubhouse. Having parked up and secured all the bunting the East Coast and South West Gaffers joined their North West hosts in the Clubhouse for a buffet, quiz and briefing for the weekend ahead.

Saturday morning dawned with very light airs and sunshine. The plan was for a gentle sail down to Howtown for a lunchtime drink at the pub. The sail was certainly very gentle with plenty of rowing involved and auxiliary power for those with outboard or inboard engines available. A few took advantage of a tow from those with engines. Sarah, Beverley and Dee cycled down the quiet road to join the sailors. This is the first time all six Gafflings have been together and several members took the opportunity to hire one to test out how well they sail. The general consensus continues to be very positive, with at least two 'converts' sailing them for the first time.

After an excellent day sailing from Ullswater Sailing Club to Howtown on Saturday, the OGA fleet set out to sail the full length of Ullswater in beautiful sunshine, light winds but the promise of better winds for the afternoon return. After the briefing at 1000 on Sunday 24 August, 2025 it took about an hour to make ready and 14 Gaffers set out to sail to Glenridding and back. They were supported by the safety boat from Arnside Sailing Club helmed by Alastair Simpson and Crispin (Chris) Vyner-Brooks. The outward leg took just over three hours, tacking down in beautiful sunshine with some boats taking advantage of a tow from the safety boat or others with auxiliary power.

After a short rest ashore at Glenridding, the fleet returned to the Yacht Club enjoying a gorgeous sail with the wind behind taking just two hours. This allowed skippers and crews time for a quick turnaround to catch a fleet of taxis provided by AM2PM taxis of Penrith or drive themselves the five miles to Tirril for an excellent meal at the Queens Head.



2nd Gaffling 4.1 Championship

The first National Championship was cancelled due to poor weather in 2023 and in 2024, when the postponed first Championship was run on the River Deben, only three boats took part: 'Suffling', 'Essling' and 'Shrimp'.

The event on Ullswater, ably organised by the North West OGA in collaboration with the East Coast Gaffers (who trailed four Gafflings to the Lake District from Essex and Norfolk), was a great success. All six boats took part in a final after three sets of heats allowed 20 OGA members wanting to 'have a go' to race in a Gaffling 4.1.

Racing was very competitive with some heats and the final being extremely close finishes. This boat is proving to be popular with both young and older Gaffers, with the youngest participant this weekend being just five years old.

The Final

WINNER: Pete Elliston & Beverley Yates (EC): 'Suffling'

2ND PLACE: Pete & Clare Thomas (EC): 'Linling'

3RD PLACE: Naomi Filio & Amana Wynne-Morgan (NW): 'Tunstall Tide'

4th: Nick, Ollie & Elliot Phillips (EC): 'Jabberwocky'

5th: Jeremy Lambert & Dave Hindle (NW): 'Essling'

DNF (CAPSIZED) Steve Yates & Yvonne Mitchell (EC): 'Shrimp'

We would like to thank the following who ensured everyone enjoyed themselves on the water and ashore over the weekend:

Safety Boat helm: Alasdair Simpson & Crispin (Chris)

Vyner Brooks, NW Area, David Bewick, SW Area.

Safety boat loaned by Arnside Sailing Club

Photography: Jane Walker, Clare Thomas, Nick Costen, Mary Gibbs, Naomi Filio, Steve & Beverley Yates

Hosts, providing launch, storage and campsite area:

Ullswater Yacht Club

OGA Officers from the North West and East Coast Areas

Officer of the Day (Gaffling Championship):

Mike Dixon, EC Area

Race Admin.: Sarah Adie, EC Area

Find more reports, videos and results on the website.



Norfolk Broads Rally: 5 - 7 September, 2025

Your Editor was pleased to receive several reports from this popular event, hosted on the Norfolk Wherry 'Albion'. The first is from new member, Charlie, sailing with his Dad & the dog, Flora.

The OGA weekend on the Norfolk Broads was a great first event for us to meet some great people and stylish boats. From the very first pint of ale to the final sail home, it was packed with good food, good company and some very enjoyable sailing. Things kicked off on Friday night with a warm welcome aboard the Norfolk Wherry 'Albion', a pint of Albion ale fittingly enjoyed on her deck and a great home cooked chilli-con-carne served in a rather wherry looking shaped tortilla bowl.

Saturday morning saw the small boats sailing upwind and up tide towards the Black Mill. The wind was fair, which meant

some typical tacking up the Broads, close to the reeds, and in the reeds at some points! It was great to see all the Gaffs in full sail in the sun. Gybing round we set off downwind to South Walsham for lunch. Of course, 'Albion' had to provide some mischief on the way. At one point she somehow came storming past us at full speed during a long lull in the wind, her sails drawing beautifully. I couldn't help but shout "Where's the wind?" The answer came soon enough when the tender appeared at her stern, engine running, with Carl shouting back: "I am the wind!"

By lunchtime we were rafted up around 'Albion' in South Walsham Broad. We tucked into my fresh homemade bread, which earned plenty of compliments. The breeze picked up and sent us on a lively sail home. The river was busy with day cruisers, so it became a bit of a game weaving between them, enough to keep us sharp, but all part of the fun.

Sunday brought more wind and a different kind of sailing. With reefs tucked into the Wherry's sail, she powered downwind towards Ranworth in style. The stronger breeze made for a faster ride, and I even had the chance to take the helm. Taking the helm was a real treat, amazing to feel the Wherry respond as she moved along. On the way back, Dad provided the final smile and photo opportunity of the weekend. While we were carefully handling the Wherry, he came chugging past us with a grin, powered by the little Seagull motor strapped to the back of his recently acquired smacks boat. Sometimes it seems horsepower, no matter how small, has its advantages.

By the time we tied up, what stuck with me most was how much fun gaff-rigged boats really are. They've got their quirks, but that was the joy of the weekend. It was great to sail 'Albion' and meet lots of passionate and lovely sailors on a great sailing weekend on the Broads. Thanks Martin, Shona, everyone who helped organise, and everyone who attended to put together such a lovely weekend of sailing.

This next report comes from Roland, our newest member, based in Bristol.

Ronnie's and my membership is so new that the ink still dissolves in hot water (long story) and we are not quite sure if we exist. So all of the below was a complete surprise. Saturday was the day for dinghy memories, mainly because Sunday was the day for Wherry memories and the wind was even stronger than previously. I reckon Saturday was force 2 to 5 with not much in between, but I defer to others as to which particular tree was swaying in which particular manner. I think there were two small boat sailors out when I was on the water on Sunday, including one large dog with that "I have to let my owner take his exercise" slightly embarrassed look about him/her. It was great to see a number of boat dogs enjoying their adventures over the weekend.

I spent much of my childhood scrabbling around on the north Thanet sea wall, with a sighting of one of the last two working Thames Sailing Barges as a highlight of the day, so discovering that I had stumbled upon a visit by the Albion Wherry was absolutely at the top of my list: and then this brilliant bloke let me take the helm. I was actually sailing a 60 foot vessel up a river, and it's a really rhythmic, poised boat to experience.

Understandably, members were obliged to pack up as Sunday



Norfolk fleet Photo: Des Trollip



*Photos: above Rainbow Dave
below Sam Francis*



progressed. Our Saturday sail as a flotilla had been worthy of any weekend, particularly the downwind run from the Black Mill to the entrance leading to Whelpton. Lunch tied to the 'Albion' in the middle of the Weirs was an event in itself and we suspect raised some interest from shore based onlookers. The ample supply of tea, coffee and cake aboard 'Albion' seemed as inexhaustible as it was generous. We pottered on the Broad for a while, going round in circles at the entrance, gently wafted in a light breeze through the dyke onto the Bure. Here utter mayhem ensued beating through a challenging breeze surrounded by Saturday afternoon cruisers. As new members, it was reassuring to learn that many of the 'old hands' had acquired tales to tell of that particular leg, that were shared cheerfully as we progressed along the Bure on the Sunday Wherry, which the cruisers seemed inclined to avoid.

I don't think I came across one overtly bad tempered person on the Broads while we were sailing. The crew of the 'Albion' provided loads of information enhanced by their obvious attachment to the Wherry. Every member of the Gaffers was kind and welcoming, and made a holiday we'd been anticipating for some time into something completely unexpected and fun. My memory after we had wandered over to the Sunday night fire pit becomes a little hazy, but I seem to recollect promises to attend limitless rallies. I do hope so!

Finally, another report from more new members, Rainbow Dave & Sarah.

The morning briefing took place on the bank of the river Bure at 0945 following a hearty breakfast of sausage baps. The sail was raised at 1000 and we headed NW at a 2.9 knots and a tide pushing us upriver. We passed the entrance to the River Ant and St Benet's Abbey with a flotilla of hire boats in awe of the majestic 'Albion' as she sailed effortlessly along. We headed up river until 1100 and then dropped sail to turn fully around. This passage was into wind at times and the massive sail on 'Albion' flapped and jostled to find the wind she required – directional power assistance was given by the tender and its outboard. Everyone on board had the opportunity to take the helm whilst the rest of the OGA's drank tea in the sunshine and caught up with each other on recent sailing adventures. We stopped for lunch on South Walsham Broad at 1230. 15 assorted OGA dinghies drew alongside allowing skipper and helms to enjoy a marvellous array of homemade food and cakes together.

We returned along the Bure, finding ourselves in the middle of an ECCC Race. Several Broads cruisers with a vast spread of canvas tacking round the 90 degree bend, heeling far over was quite a sight. The crew and skipper did an excellent job of directing the plastic hire boats to pass us safely and we got to assist in a bit of boat handling when the last manoeuvre to turn round resulted in a 'quant overboard' and recovery.

There were two Wherry trips on Sunday as dinghy sailing was not as popular due to the strong wind. 'Albion' was heavily reefed, and made frequent gybes on the outward journey, which we prepared for by lying on the deck to avoid the heavy sail. On the last trip of the day 'Albion' once again found herself in the middle of a race, this time requiring the leading race yacht to perform some extremely well handled short tacks between 'Albion' and the bank.



Roland & Ronnie Photo: Sam Francis



*'Ariel', Beverley Yates
'Albion' Julie Hills*



Reeuwijk Raid: 4 - 5 October, 2025

Storm Amy wrought havoc for those intending to join the Reeuwijk Raid this year! All but two of the UK participants cancelled their ferry crossing just in time to avoid fees but Pete and Sarah were already in the Netherlands. They bring this report hot from the ferry back to Essex on Monday.

Well here we are on the ferry back from Reeuwijk 2025, just Sarah and me! Several months ago we planned to go the event some 10 days before the start so as to get better value from the very expensive ferry crossing when towing a rig over 40 foot long! The trip was booked and as some of the East Coast (usual suspects) for the event could not make the extended period we carried on alone and had an amazing time in Friesland sailing with the CCSK Cornish Crabber Schipperskring, but that is another story!

Fortunately for us as we were already in Holland, when the weather turned bad with Storm Amy delivering high winds of 6/7/8, we carried on as the 'Flag bearers' for the English Gaffers. On the Thursday before the event we dropped our 21' Drascombe Coaster into the water at the Elfhoeven Sailing Club and had a lovely sail with 'Jan Blank' went around the first lake reaching up and down taking photos and videos of each other. The Drascombe with a full main and topsail over proved of great interest and very successful.

But, to get there that early we left Friesland on the Wednesday as the bad weather made us change our sailing plans too. We sailed across the IJsselmeer on instruments and a foghorn blast every 2mins as there was thick fog for the entire crossing. Friday was spent in and out of the bars in Gouda but we missed everyone else from the UK who had pulled out leaving us as 'Billy with Dutch mates'!! The bar at the Club was opened for us and we had a communal bread and soup night with salads. The fire pit was full of rainwater!

Saturday dawned with force 5 – 6 with 7 gusts and after a morning drinking lots of coffee the plan was to cruise from the Club up the lake to Rik Homan's yard for lunch. "Let's give it a try!" was the briefing lead's phrase. We did, with just a few stalwart boats reefing everything in sight and trying. We used a jib and mizzen as a number 3 reef and turned back! The bigger boats got to Rik's where we enjoyed a great social lunch in the shelter of his new boat store. Sarah and I went there by bike!

That night the Club catered for us all serving a great chicken curry. Edith played her piano accordion with Else and Robert on alto and tenor sax., so some great blends of tunes. Prizegiving was creatively interesting as always. The main award was presented to the Club bar staffer who did sail to Rik's yard. Edgar won the booby prize as he forgot to bring the mainsail for his barge boat. In true fashion, he borrowed one which was un-reefable and nearly sailed the boat under.

Sunday saw lighter winds! Force 4 to 5 with gusts of only 6! So, all apart from Edgar reefed. We ran a 2 reefed main with topsail over plus jib and mizzen, a very handy rig. The plan was to go upwind to the far corner and pop through the bridge to the next lake, sail around 'like an Admiral' and then back to the bridge, sheltered in the westerly, for lunch.



After lunch the Admiral (Rik) sounded the horn and we left into the near lake and the heavens opened and it blew. We used the third reef of our main and Edgar's boat looked like a surfboard with a very big rig!

Only nine boats took part that day and apparently Sarah and I got the blame for going out as 'we had come so far'!! Beers and pizzas as guests of Rik and Edith for the remaining 12 members of the event wound up the proceedings in true traditional fashion. Our thanks go to Rik and Edith and the Elfhoeven Club once again for managing the event and pulling it off so we can say that 'we did survive' which was the phrase Dirk Peeters coined on Friday night.

Report and photos: Pete Elliston & Sarah Adie



RIP Mike Robertson

Mike Robertson from Holbrook died on 1, August 2025 in Ipswich Hospital after a short stay, having had dementia for the last three years.

Mike worked in IT at Anglian Water for many years, whilst serving on the East Coast OGA Area Committee and continued his involvement later into retirement. He discovered, during his time with us and in the company of Jon Wainwright, that they both shared a passion for model railways. I remember several sub-committee meetings 'playing trains'!

Mike sailed the gaff yacht 'Lillibullero' for ten years from 2011 and before her a 19' jolly boat which was regularly sailed out of Holbrook Creek. He was also the moorings master there for some time.

Members may remember too that Mike did a great rendition of the Stanley Holloway monologue 'Three Ha'pence a Foot' for our amusement.

Mike was the main instigator of the OGA visits to the Royal Hospital School at Holbrook, River Stour which featured in the East Coast calendar as a popular 'small boat' event for several years. On one of these occasions, all the boats dragged anchors, even 'Lillibullero' and 'Transcur'!

Mike will be missed by all, and as I write this, I am looking over from Wrabness to Holbrook.

Cheers Mike!

Pete Elliston

Photos: Beverley Yates & Lorna Hill



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The EC Gaffers Facebook page is updated regularly and there are WhatsApp groups for social 'chat' and events. Events information and booking forms are on the main OGA website:

www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/east_coast_events.html

The Association website provides access to 'East Coast Gaffers Online': Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and EASTCOASTER. All Newsletters from 1994 may be downloaded to print at home

www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/east_coast_online.html

Recent issues are also available to view online as 'flipbooks'

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For £6 per annum, East Coast Members may also opt in to having a printed copy of EASTCOASTER mailed to them on a quarterly basis. Send your cheque and request for this service to: Sarah Adie, Arpajon, 25a Harwich Road, Mistley, CO11 1ND

If you and/or another family Member in your household has an email address and would like to receive the monthly mailings, or you have changed your email address, please contact Colin Stroud, Association Secretary to confirm your details.

Contact Colin by email: secretary@oga.org.uk



Above: Small Gaffers on the Norfolk Broads 2025 Photo: Julie Hills

Below: Ullswater Rally, 2025. Photo: Steve Yates

