OLD GAFFERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 1970/4

First, the usual welcome to the following new members:

J. H. Beale, Quay House, Golant, Fowey, Cornwall.
Carlotta

W. J. H. Benoist, 270 Ashurst Drive, Ilford, Essex.
Merlin

B. Blair, 92 Goulburn St., Goodwood, South Africa.
Spray

J. Christian, 22 Pitfold Ave., Haslemere, Surrey.
Sea Fever

R. J. Churn, 6 Stromness Place, Southend-on-Sea, Essex.
Forfar

A. H. J. Davis, 17 Southdown Drive, London S.W.20.
Skip Jack

R. Evelin, 7 Scott House, Jervis Road, Portsmouth, Hants.
Star of Fowey

N. R. Gibbs, Hunters Way, Hunts Road, St. Lawrence, Ventnor, I.O.W.
Marie Ann

R. K. C. Giddings, Briar House, Three Gates Lane, Haslemere, Surrey.
Sea Fever

J.- P. Henkart, 30 Bosstraat, St. Martens, Latem, Belgium.
Henriette

A. J. Higginbotham, Watkins Chemist, 18 High St., Shepton Mallet, Somerset.
Whimbrel

E. Julber, 3540 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles 90005, California, U.S.A.
Sol Lys

P. H. Liddiard, 55 Violet Ave., Hillingdon, Middx.
Gladys

J. McKillop, Combe Down, Malborough, Kingsbridge, Devon.
Tern

K. M. Main, c/o Count L. Scheel-Plessen, 2431 Sierhagen Neustadt, Holstein, West Germany.
Ituna

D. Rolfe, 68a Neal St., London W.C.2.
Kirsty

G. Sutno, 14 Northern Heights, Crescent Road, N.8.
Norseman

M. E. White, 80 Kilmersdon Rd., Haydon, Radstock, Bath, Somerset.
Ark Royal

DIARY DATES

Saturday, November 7th Social evening at the Maldon Little Ship Club, 7.0 p.m. - no booking needed.

Friday, November 27th Solent Area A.G.M. and Social evening at the Emsworth Slipper Sailing Club, South Street, Emsworth, at 7.30 p.m. (See Page 5).

Saturday, January 16th 1971 Annual General Meeting and Grand Social evening in London. Full details in next issue.

* Saturday, February 27th 1971 Provisional date for informal
* (and expensive) dinner at the Martinez Restaurant, Regent St.
* This year's dinner was voted the best sailing club dinner ever - full a la carte menu.

Saturday, July 17th 1971 East Coast Race.

Saturday, September 4th 1971 Solent Race.

*
* This date has now been confirmed by the
* Martinez Restaurant.

1970 SOLENT RACE

In the last issue I said it had to happen sometime - strong to gale force winds on Race Day, but damn it, it needn't have happened twice in one year! Tom Cook assured me that the Solent Race was worse than the East Coast, and I'm sure it was. The day started wet, but not too windy although the forecast was for gusts up to Force 7. The race started in reasonable conditions, fairly sunny, boisterous wind, but during the second round the centre of the disturbance passed over, and we had a sharp veer in the wind, which was recorded as up to sixty knots, with heavy rain. Later in the afternoon it eased off and the rain stopped, but the damage was done (literally!)

In view of the weather forecast, the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club sailing committee chose a course with a shorter second round, to try and keep some shelter for the fleet if the forecast of winds veering and increasing in the afternoon was correct. The course chosen was West Ryde Middle, Clipper, East Gurnard, line, West Ryde Middle, South Bramble, East Gurnard, finish; about twelve miles total.

Shortly before the start was due, Terminist fouled and carried away the outer limit buoy for the line, so a half hour's postponement was called whilst a new limit mark was laid. When the gun eventually went at 11.30, Paguera, Saari, Scamp and Norseman were over the line. Mike Richardson in Betty made (as usual) an excellent start, but A. A. Muirhead was overtaking him fast in Melmore. Trammel looked like the third boat over, with Skipjack starting at about the same time. Then came Fancy, Dreva, Quiver, Fanny, Patsy, Saga, Equinoxe and Fiona. After them it was hard to see who was next. Paguera, Bries, Morning Star and Richard Davey had all cleared the line within two minutes of the gun.

In all, the R.C.Y.C. observers had ticked off 44 starters. All boats over the line at the gun had re-started within three and a half minutes, and the last two boats seen to start were Madcap, a Pilot Cutter new to our fleet, and Merope.

Just as the fleet were nicely spread out from the line, the Seaspeed hovercraft came down river. Her pilot had a real problem in trying to find a gap he could wriggle through - it must have looked like an almost unbroken curtain of sail to him, and he had to come well over to the West shore.

Shortly after the tailenders cleared the line, the leaders could be seen on their way round to Clipper. Melmore clear in the lead, then Equinoxe, then Gaivota, looking very smart and easily spotted with her blue mainsail. Theodora lay fourth, then Dreva. After Dreva it was not possible to recognise individual boats.

It was at Clipper that the day's real mishaps started. Thalia was in collision with Richard Davey whilst rounding the mark, Thalia ending up minus bowsprit. In the ensuing chaos, Regard unluckily collided with the disabled Thalia, and had to retire.

The first retirement to reach home was Romilda - Fred had decided his crew's experience was not up to coping with so heavy a boat in the far from ideal conditions. Then Thalia limped in - a rather sad sight. Cynara, Tern, Sarah Two and Trammel also retired during the first round.

Weather conditions remained more or less constant for the first round, and in a few seconds over an hour and a half, Theodora led the fleet over the line at the end of the first seven miles. She was going beautifully, and it was a pleasant change to see her without Duet ahead! Melmore followed about a minute and a half later, hotly pursued by Gaivota.

Then after an interval of nearly a quarter of an hour, Dreva came in, and for the next forty minutes the spotters were kept fully occupied as boat after boat appeared from behind the Squadron Castle. Twenty-five boats were duly recorded, then

came Melmore, level with Dusky Maid. Then the little Valkyrie, and Theodora and Gaivota, followed by Madcap, Storm and Morning Star. As these three set off again for the West Ryde Middle, the weather conditions deteriorated sharply. The wind veered and increased, and rain started.

Betty came home next - her mainsail spilling wind, with the gaff well lowered, and all sails straining hard at their sheets - it looked a wild, rough, wet ride. Dreva appeared seven minutes later, also with her gaff lowered and sails spilling wind, then came Saari. Even this boat, designed and built for work in the Gulf of Bothnia, looked far from happy in the very wild conditions.

Richard Davey came in next, with her mainsail stowed and her mizzen showing some nasty looking tears. Fanny followed, reefed right down, but apparently undamaged. Marishka, Firefly, Saga, Fancy and Scamp all came in well reefed, then came Terminist. John Dines had taken off her topsail, and she did not seem to have her usual complement of headsails, but she was moving nicely under all plain sail.

And that appeared to be that. Thirty boats completed one round, and only fifteen finishers. Boats were coming in from other quarters, though. Dusky Maid appeared with badly torn headsails; Mina showed up minus all her mast above the hounds, and further out Norseman lay dismasted. Over on the East Cowes shore, Bries and Daisy Bell could be seen aground. It was later learned that Daisy Bell had damaged her rudder, and Bries had gone to help, but had been unable to tow her clear until the wind eased.

As the weather cleared a little, a careful look showed that Terminist was not, after all, last to finish. Out by the Bramble a lone gaffer was doggedly fighting on. A careful look, and she was identified as Patsy. On she struggled, until eventually she finished - a few seconds over two hours behind Terminist - a worthy winner of the Laggards Ladle.

The final results were:- (Start 11.30.00

FINAL POSN.			CORR. TIME	POSN. OVER LINE	FIN. TIME	CLASS
1	Melmore	A.A.Muirhead	2 22 02	1	13 47 14	1
2	Gaivota	R.W.Francis	2 26 10	3	13 50 41	1
3	Betty	M.Richardson	2 34 34	4	14 18 00	2o
4	Theodora	O.Y.C.	2 42 24	2	13 49 10	1o
5	Fanny of Cowes	D.T.Cook	2 44 07	8	14 35 02	2o
6	Saga	D. Lord	2 51 38	11	14 46 50	2
7	Saari	C.M.Waddington	2 52 59	6	14 30 00	1
8	Marishka	T.N.MacKean	2 55 34	9	14 44 00	2o
9	Firefly	H.R.Poulton	2 55 36	10	14 46 25	2o
10	Dreva	J.B.Pot	2 56 11	5	14 25 19	1
11	Fancy	J.Wright	3 02 49	12	14 52 00	2o
12	Richard Davey	C.& J.Robinson	3 04 12	7	14 34 45	1o
13	Scamp	J.A.Vallis	3 10 15	13	14 53 28	2o
14	Terminist	J.Dines	4 18 10	14	14 54 15	1o
15	Patsy	C.M.Jefferson	4 51 17	15	16 54 44	2o

As so many boats retired during the second round, placings have been worked out for the end of the first round:

1	Melmore	1 35 07	2	13 01 54
2	Gaivota	1 36 03	3	13 02 27
3	Fanny of Cowes	1 41 02	11	13 23 54
4	Firefly	1 41 44	10	13 23 48
5	Daisy Bell	1 42 37	18	13 34 58
6	Paguera	1 44 06	9	13 23 08
7	Theodora	1 45 29	1	13 00 23
8	Saari	1 46 18	6	13 20 25
9	Betty	1 46 19	5	13 19 23
10	Dreva	1 46 45	4	13 16 13
11	Saga	1 47 39	17	13 33 27
12.	Marishka	1 49 48	14	13 31 20
13	Fancy	1 49 55	15	13 31 34

14	Richard Davey	1 50 58	7	13 21 18
15	Fiona	1 52 15	8	13 21 55
16	Scamp	1 52 48	13	13 30 39
17	Skipjack	1 54 06	16	13 33 21
18	Mary Niven	1 55 41	25	13 45 28
19	Patsy	1 55 54	19	13 39 13
20	Valkyrie	1 58 05	27	13 48 36
21	Golden Vanity	1 59 52	12	13 27 59
22	Einna	2 01 40	21	13 40 33
23	Dusky Maid	2 03 22	26	13 47 14
24	Mina	2 05 56	24	13 42 21
25	Nordbourne	2 06 29	23	13 42 18
26	Storm	2 14 12	29	13 57 29
27	Morning Star	2 14 40	30	13 59 00
28	Equinoxe	2 25 01	22	13 40 39
29	Madcap	2 36 47	28	13 56 32
30	Terminist	2 43 36	20	13 39 26

As can be seen, the squall which hit the fleet after Gaivota finished had its effect on the final placings. Betty got almost 'rocket assistance' on her final leg; Dreva lost a few minutes, and most of the later finishers lost from eleven to twenty minutes. The noteworthy exceptions were Marishka and Saga, who lost only about eight minutes each. Terminist, of course, lost less than five minutes!

The supper at the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club did much to restore spirits after a not all that pleasant day.

Then came the prizegiving. Alec Rangabe, our President, commented on the race, remarking that on East Coast Race day he had sent a telegram saying 'Gaffers weather should sort men from boys'. Now he had experienced some, and had decided he was definitely one of the boys! He then thanked the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club for their help and hospitality, and Jane Scarlett presented Mrs. Elliot, wife of the R.C.Y.C. secretary, with a bouquet. Then the O.G.A. typist, Mrs. Scarlett, presented the prizes. The Dead Eye Trophy and the Le Havre Plate to Melmore, who had achieved the somewhat unusual distinction of sailing up to her handicap and finishing first on elapsed and corrected time. The Channel Cup and Commodore's flag to Betty; The Emsworth Cleat to Fanny, for the second year running; The Channel Plate to Saga; a apecial prize for the first boat over 40 ft. L.W.L. to Theodora; The Laggards Ladle to Patsy; and The C. H. Paxton Memorial Trophy for the best non-prizewinning performance in three races to Terminist - a very popular award as John Dines has given many people a great deal of pleasure in seeing her 80 ft. hull racing with our fleet. John enlivened the occasion by presenting to the R.C.Y.C. a limit mark he seemed to have acquired. The final trophy, the Anchor Trophy for the last boat to start without using an anchor, and to complete the course, could not be awarded according to the deed of gift, so with the consent of the donor, Mr. J. B. Pot, it was awarded to Madcap, who was the last starter to complete one round of the course.

The ceremonies ended with the youngest member of the Scarlett family, Helen, presenting a bouquet to her mother - and then loudly demanding it back again!

In terms of damage done, this had undoubtedly been the worst Old Gaffers Race ever. Tom Cook assured me that at its worst the wind was very much stronger than it had been for the East Coast Race, and it would seem that we can really take pride in the fact that the damage was not far worse. Most of the boats out through the worst of the weather were over fifty years old, and the standards of fitting out and seamanship which brought them through were indeed high.

Once again, we all owe a debt of gratitude to Colonel Elliot of the R.C.Y.C., and also to their Sailing Secretary, Commander Fenton, who not only had the far from pleasant day's duty running the race in the wind and rain, but who also gave up the evening and the Sunday morning to help us resolve the protest

arising from the collision at Clipper. Also the thanks of all concerned must go to the owners and crews who came along on the Sunday morning to give evidence which helped the Committee to arrive at their decision. Finally, great thanks must go to Gerry Hann, who gave Michael Millar an 'over the telephone service for T(H)CFs while you wait', and then brought his father along to help spot and calculate the results on Race Day. As he was also involved with an increase in the family a couple of days before the race, this was indeed a wonderful service.

The following letter was received a few days after the race:-

Harbour Office,
Cowes, I.W.

Dear Mr. Scarlett,

On behalf of my wife and myself, I shall be most grateful if you will extend my sincere thanks to the Elder Gaffer, President and Members of the Old Gaffers Association for their kind hospitality to dinner and the prize giving on the occasion of you Old Gaffers Race from Cowes.

The weekend was not without its dramas and will no doubt be remembered for many a year. Nevertheless, it was wonderful to see you all at Cowes and without doubt to see the Old Gaffers on the line is a sight to be remembered.

Again, many sincere thanks for your very kind hospitality.

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) H.N.J. Wrigley, Harbour Master.

FOR SALE WHIMBREL, ex PANSY, ex MOTH. 23.5' L.O.A. Gaff Sloop, built Luke, Hamble, 1906. Pitch pine on oak. Auxiliary Stuart 1938. Family expanding, needs larger boat. After years of pleasure from Whimbrel, owner would like her to go to a suitable owner . . . and to the right person he would make the price very reasonable.
T.A. Benwell, Watkins Chemist, High Street, Shepton Mallet, Som.

SOLENT AREA A.G.M. AND SOCIAL EVENING

Nominations for elections of Officers and Members of the Committee to be sent in writing at least one week before the Meeting to Michael Millar. It would be helpful if members wishing to raise any matter of substance could also notify him in advance, so that the time spent on the Business part of the evening can be kept to a minimum, and members can then transfer their attention to the bar and Fred's soup and bangers. To help the catering, please notify intention to attend on the coupon below. Members are invited to bring photographs and/or film of the Race for all to enjoy; so that we have the right projectors, please indicate what you can bring.

To: M.D. Millar, 107 Baker Street, London W1M 1FE.

I hope to attend the Solent Area A.G.M. and Social Evening at the Emsworth Slipper Sailing Club on Friday 27th November.

Please ask Fred to allow Soup and Bangers for ___ bodies.

I will bring ___ 35mm slides; about ___ feet of ___ film.

NAME ..... BOAT .....

ADDRESS ..... TEL. NO. .....

.....

NEWSLETTER CONTENT Recent correspondence has included a plea and several hints for more technical material in the Newsletters. Histories of boats, details of their construction, accounts of yarns with old shipwrights or skippers, etc. would all be most welcome. As many of our boats represent the few survivors of once common types, and quite a number are unique, we ought to try and keep some record of these craft. Information is also of great value in helping members with technical queries. Before dismissing this appeal - think back over your sailing life - have you never wanted information on any point, possibly of rig, rudder design, ballast stowing, sail sizes, etc.? Then think that by letting us have details of your boat now, you might be able to help some other member who has just such a query. Never mind whether you can write a polished article - it's the technical content that counts!

FOLLY INN RALLY

A fortnight after the Solent Race, the final Rally of the season was held in the form of a Jolly at the Folly, that haven for yachtsmen of all vintages which lies up the River Medina from Cowes. Eight of our race-battered fleet appeared in the solid, together with the two defectors Sophie and Bunny, tall-stickers whom we are trying to persuade to re-rig in a seaman-like manner. In addition, Fiona was beneaped at Bursledon, so Peter Barrett borrowed the first floating vessel he could find; Saari had engine trouble (and it was flat calm) so Chris Waddington came over in his uncle's Nantucket; and Mina was still nursing a broken mast, so Frank Parsons came over by road. Thus, thirteen boats were represented by an uncountable number of bodies, who consumed even less countable pints of beer, and as the evening drew on, the stories of the adventures in the Race became even more exciting than the event itself. In contrast to the latter, the weekend was one of flat calm and fog, so the only strain this time was on machinery.

M.D. Millar.

ARK ROYAL

M. White, of 80 Kilmersdon Road, Haydon, Radstock, Nr. Bath, Somerset, writes:

I could write reams of comment about 'Ark Royal', but will confine myself to a few notes for the time being. I deny - with a touch of resentment - that Ark Royal shows any linear descent from the old Quay Punts. Fine manoeuvreable sea boats they are, but I could never admire their hull lines. I prefer to think of Ark Royal as being descended from the old Cornish trading boats as described by Basil Greenhill in Vol. 1 of The Merchant Schooners. He writes: "Some very small ketches had cocked up miniature counters, which had the appearance of the hind feathers of a goose and were in consequence known in Appledore as 'guze arsed'." She also has a spoon bow and a moderate sheer. Is

built of Pitch pine on oak frames and copper fastened. The deck is - I think - of pine. Dr. Beckly, the previous owner, feeling that the hull was good for many more years had a new mast fitted, two new sails - a main and staysail - renewed some halliards and some rigging screws. He found the old Stuart Turner petrol engine unreliable and fitted a 3 h.p. Petter diesel. The deck he covered with Trakmark. According to the Registry book there was no engine fitted at the time of building. Originally I think she must have carried a pair of sweeps as there are two sockets mounted on the coaming to take rowlocks. Much credit to Dr. Beckly for spending so much on Ark Royal. I am sure he never got his money's worth in sailing.

Below she is a bit of a mess. I hope to strip out the entire interior and rebuild it on more practical lines at the same time preserving the '30s atmosphere. One of the period items below is a copper charcoal stove, almost grey with neglect. I took this home with me and at the time of writing am nearly half way through cleaning it. So far, it has taken six hours and three sheets of fine emery cloth to come to a state where I can start to burnish it. During the cleaning process minute dents and imperfections in the swageing and brass fittings lead me to think that it is hand made. The name stamped on the top is Pasgallatkey, Cowes. Perhaps some of your members can give more information on this article.

I would like to collect as much information as possible about Ark Royal with a view to writing her history - much or little. With this end in view I pass on to you the names of previous owners, as listed in the registry book, in the hope that you will publish them in some future newsletter. Then perhaps, by coincidence - interest - or plain straightforward enquiry - some information may come from it. I also intend to write to the Yachting Monthly in the hope that their wide circulation will bring a little more knowledge.

The original owner, for whom the boat was built was William Bayford Stone, Chartered Accountant, of 48 Copthall Ave., London, June 27th 1932. Then, Brian Mansfield, Belfairs, Lurgashall, Petworth, Surrey, September 9th 1946. On 10th June 1953 the owner was Christopher Harris Bulteel of Charlestown, St. Austell, Cornwall, passing to Monica Barbara Gilchrist, of 27 The Esplanade, Fowey, Cornwall on June 2nd 1958.

Incidentally, I have recently been corresponding with a Mr. M. Guppy of Poole, who writes that Adlard Coles mentions Ark Royal in one of his books as an example of traditional building. I must start rooting around our local library and get on to it. And if I go chuntering on much longer I shall have written a slim volume.

I spent a week on board, August 14th to 21st, with the intention of sailing to Poole - conditions permitting. Conditions did not permit. I had not previously seen her rigged, and when I did the state of her running rigging was disappointing. The topping lift, backstay purchases and bobstay fittings were useless. The engine was in a poor state through neglect, needing a new voltage regulator and some attention to the motor itself. It was Tuesday before all this was finished and then the Monsoons started. There was a gale on the 16th and the tales of those who tottered in on Monday did nothing to encourage us. We tried out the motor on the Thursday with a trip up the Tamar. It died on us just short of the Tamar Bridge, leaving us in a sticky situation, drifting down on three tugs moving a destroyer into a fuelling berth. Fortunately we had the mainsail bent on and all credit to Ark Royal, she can sail given the flutter of a seagull's wing. There was little else to move her. I suspect water in the fuel being the reason for our engine failure. On Friday the boatyard had a crane in to lift some other boats, so I took the opportunity to have my boat lifted out. She will be launched again on September 1st on the Bristol Channel and moor in the City Dock in Bristol for the rest of the season.

FOR SALE MARITA Maldon oyster smack. 2 double, 2 single berths. Galley, stove, toilet, bunk mattresses, etc. Stuart 8 h.p., dinghy & rubber dinghy. 8 sails. £900.
P.K. Senior, Fleetwood, Raglan Road, Frinton on Sea, Essex.

BRISTOL CHANNEL Pilot Cutter, built John Hambley, Cardiff, 1889. 50' x 12.75' x 8'. 30 h.p. Kelvin petrol/para. auxiliary. Spoon bow, counter stern. Most attractive & basically original example of this type. Sensible offers invited.
J. Crabb, 329 High Street, Herston, Swanage, Dorset.

FREEDOM NINE 27' x 8' x 3'. Converted ship's lifeboat auxiliary ketch. 8 h.p. reconditioned Stuart Turner with reduction gear box, fitted 1969, incl. new shaft & propeller. 4 berths in two separate cabins, Baby Blake, Calor gas stove. New terylene mainsail, cotton jib & mizzen , cockpit cover, & incl. all gear. Lying Langstone, Havant, Hants. £650.

CORALIND 30' x 9' x 5' 6". Designed by Fred Shephard, built by Whites of Southampton, 1908. Canoe sterned, centre cockpit, 4 berths. 8 h.p. Stuart Turner. Originally rigged as gaff yawl, modernised in thirties & re-rigged as bermudian sloop. Lying Mill Rythe, off Hayling Island, Chichester Harbour. Offers.
E.A. Ollard, 27 London Road South, Merstham, Surrey.
Tel: Merstham 3920.

NOTE Several members who have sent in advertisements recently have queried the cost. Please note that all advertising of boats, gear, and other items of nautical interest is free to members. Personal advertisements for non members will be accepted free if the material advertised is likely to be of interest to members.

Trade advertisements (typed in the body of the Newsletter) at 3d per word.

Full page advertisements, attachments for mailing with Newsletters etc. by negotiation depending on the work involved. Typical cost £5 per page. Currently, 500 copies of the Newsletter are printed and distributed.

EIGHT DAYS LIVERPOOL TO BOSTON (Is this a record?)

A Morecambe Bay Prawner through the English canals

Nine o'clock the next morning two hungover architectural students steered Deva under the hydraulic lift bridge into a typical summer's day - rain. But the lift bridge really was a work of engineering art. These days it lets craft through about twice a blue moon, yet it is still in perfect working order, manned six days a week from 9 till 4.30 every working day. Four hydraulic rams lift fifty tons of steel roadway up ten feet, within a substantial steel frame, a tribute to Waterways engineering.

Once through the bridge, industrial Liverpool became suburban Liverpool. We passed the scene of the Grand National, the ill-fated racecourse at Aintree. The Stuart Turner was exploding nicely, the throttle being kept wide open, for the canal appeared to be quite deep. We did not worry too much about striking submerged articles, for unlike most river craft, Deva's rockered keel goes slightly deeper than the rudder, and the screw is much too high to catch any bedsteads. Besides, the weather was raining and we wanted to arrive in time for a lunch-time booze up at the next canal pub.

We came upon our first swing bridge. Luckily we saw it coming, for to stop Deva without any astern gear takes some effort. Nick had to leap for the bank at five knots with a 3" hawser between his teeth (lo and behold if rope did not uncoil quick enough - he either lost his teeth or didn't make the bank). However if we cut off the power well in advance and took Deva near enough to the bank so she just grounded, we could stop in

fifty yards. Unfortunately the first bridge was heavily barred from opening. Even with our monkey wrench we couldn't make the nuts turn. The bridge carried a cart track to a farm, so, smelling a rat, I went up to the farmer, told him what I thought of him and he came down to the bridge with two huge spanners, each over 3 feet long and with considerable effort undid the bolts. Apparently the local yobs used to leave the gate open so that he was trapped on his farm. Soon after passing through the bridge we came upon a complete cart in the middle of the canal - four wheels, shafts and all. All we could do was to pass to one side of it - seven feet beam through a seven foot gap at 5 knots. Deva reared into the air like a bucking bronco then nose dived into deep water again.

The next bridge was a road bridge, typical of many to come on the waterway. Deva grounded to a halt, as I hopped ashore up to the bridge, monkey wrench at the ready. Being my usual polite self I waited patiently for the cars to stop, but after five minutes of nose to tail traffic I decided that the loss of five minutes drinking time was enough, so I opened the bridge.

A car screeched to a halt, its front bumper overhanging the canal bank. A stream of scouse abuse poured through an opened window. I left the bridge half open, signalled to Nick, strolled over to the car with the monkey wrench and asked if anything was wrong. One glance at the two of us, unshaven, unwashed and positively ugly suggested that the driver had a choice of braining - beer bottle or wrench - if he didn't control his filthy tongue. He smiled meekly, shut the window and I opened and shut the bridge in my own good time.

As one can see from the above script, ditch crawling is far from dull - barely five miles of fresh water under her keel and a navigation hazard every mile!

However the natives became much more friendly. Small boys didn't throw stones - they followed us along the tow path on bicycles demanding where we were bound, how far we had come and how fast we were going (I lied and said she was only on 1/3 throttle - she would go three times faster, but the "law" might get on to us).

The Lancashire plain expanded before our eyes, huge fields of cabbages and corn, all looking extremely fertile. The canal wound its way along the contours of the slight swells in the landscape, while the Stuart Turner pop-popped merrily away.

Soon we came to the village of Lydiate where the road bridge was very stiff. Nick and I together weren't strong enough to move it, but the local urchins came to our rescue and some twenty straining pairs of legs soon had the bridge open and shut. Unluckily Deva's propeller jammed with a polythene bag, so the local young wives gathered to watch me do a strip-tease. The offending obstruction was removed from the propeller to the tune of comments about my beautiful body. Suggestions of "coming back to my place and I'll give you a rub down" nearly had Nick diving into the canal too, but I thought we had had enough trouble with the natives without having two enraged husbands and their friends chasing us all the way to Boston.

Leaving Lydiate astern, Deva plugged on up the Canal. The next bridge was opened well in advance for us by two small boys, whom we tipped voluntarily - it was nice to be able to keep going for the Stuart does not like ticking over nor does the keel like being rust scaled.

By one o'clock we had steamed into the Ship Inn to down a few pints of beer. Half past two saw the crew of the Deva stagger across the pub's lawn and flower bed. The engine started first time, no doubt due to the alcoholic vapour in the engineer's breath.

The Canal began to wind into hilly territory and this brought us to our first lock for twenty-nine miles. This took us some ten minutes to negotiate with the help of two young anglers, but this included some stories about my four pound

roach and advice on bait etc. Incidentally, nearly all the locks on the Leeds-Liverpool Canal are padlocked in five places, so any craft which can pass the lock in less than five minutes must be manned by professionals, or provided with a vertical take-off version of the Stuart Turner.

The scenery began to get much bleaker. The grass began to look greyer, a sure sign that Wigan was not far away. We passed lock number 90, which is just under the huge motorway viaduct of the M.6. Again this lock was a slow lock. Up to date all the locks were double locks, with one of the pair derelict, a sad reminder of the days when the canal carried over two million tons of cargo a year. We, ourselves, had not passed any other craft under way all day.

Thinking about the wonders of the commercial canal reminded me of the way narrow-boats used to negotiate locks. This was as follows. The narrow-boat under power used to run right into the lock, bashing the gates slightly apart. Whilst the gates were apart the skipper's wife used to bang a wedge in the slight opening and the level of the water in the lock used to drain through the gap. When the level was made the narrow-boat would bash its way through the lock gates, by which time the top paddles or sluices would have been opened and the bottom gates slammed shut.

With this method the professionals could climb a lock in little more time than two minutes. Needless to say the Authorities do not approve of such habits, but no one was around so I decided to try the method out.

Lock number 89 hove into sight. I took Deva to within a few feet of the gates at slow speed then gave her full throttle. Four tons of pitch pine on grown oak crunched into the gates. There was an almighty shudder and splintering sound as I rushed forward with a timber wedge in a lancing attack. Needless to say the gates opened a couple of inches and a blast of green canal water put me on my backside and sent Deva running back whence she came! So unless you are navigating a coal barge with fifty tons of cargo aboard, do as British Waterways recommend!

As we came into Wigan the scenery was desolate - acres and acres of waste industrial ground. A couple of urchins came running up to the canal armed to the teeth with missiles - with the courage of Israeli generals. We let them have it with the beer bottles at fifty paces - naturally they didn't want to risk a beating so they scarpered faster than they approached! We moored for the night at the waterways depot at Wigan Pier - what a place to go for one's holidays - ahead of a converted lifeboat with a family aboard.

Wigan has little to offer the visitor in the summer (it has rugby league football in the winter) except fish, chips and cheap beer. Nick tried to arrange for some women to come from Manchester - he has girl-friends in most big cities - but without much luck. I decided that fish and chips and a gallon of ale were more reliable forms of vice in Wigan so we headed for the nearest boozer. With the prospect of twenty locks next day we needed plenty of beer guts to open those gates.

Next morning in our usual state we set off prepared for the worst. Within fifty yards we were booked for speeding. I pleaded with an officious Waterways Clerk that we had a mere four horsepower to move four tons of nobby. I said she could not do more than the speed limit (four m.p.h.) in deep water, never mind dredging the bottom! After being let off with a caution, Deva chugged up to the next lock, to be lifted up into the view of the first commercial waterways vehicles we had seen so far. Thanks to the Clerk wasting our time we were too late to get to the next lock before a tug and two lighters. After the lighters had locked out, we went in with the tug. She was a strange craft, a craft with the same shaped and sized hull as Deva, but with a shunting engine superstructure!

The tug boat and barges turned off for Leigh and Manchester while we sailed on past a power station, where a score of lighters were being unloaded of their coal. A working waterway at last!

However, the next lock showed the typical signs of lack of use. Rusty gear, stiff lock gates and the usual five padlocks. The ground on either bank was typical - ruins and old foundations poking up above thistles and weeds, with rows of workers' terraced houses - typical Coronation Streets. To compensate this there were scores of healthy children playing around - useful lock labour! The next rise pictured the Deva loaded right down to the gunwales with dozens of little boys and girls soaked to the skin in a Lancastrian cloudburst, enjoying every minute of their short ride. Irate parents were shouting from every door, telling their kids to come inside, but to no avail. Each lock we came to, was opened by a score of little arms. I felt like an explorer on the Amazon, with hundreds of slaves making a passage whilst I rode on in state, smoking a peaceful pipe.

We passed another pleasure boat who had just come down the Wigan Flight, so at least the water was at the right level in the locks. We stopped once for another strip-tease session with the propeller then started the next stage in earnest. We had two waterways fellows to help us (British Waterway's staff are not typical of other nationalized concerns - they even like helping pleasure craft through the canals) to complement a contingent of other lads. By four o'clock in the afternoon Deva had emerged at the summit of the Wigan locks. The engine had behaved marvellously, and despite ticking over for most of the afternoon, she had only smoked a little and not conked. I gave the lads a few shillings tip - even though they were from poor families and could do with some luxury, they were embarassed to take any money; apparently many of the richer cabin cruiser types don't even thank them for helping. Anyway they did accept eventually (and bolted to the nearest tobacconist for five Woodbines and a couple of bottles of Tizer).

There was at the top of the locks a couple of men who were intending to take their craft down the flight - after the Wigan Flight we felt like case-hardened canal folk and told them about the dangers and generally put the fear of God into them! We compared the two craft. Deva was less than a foot of free-board astern, fine-lined and low in superstructure. The cabin cruiser with twice the power, three times the free-board and four times the superstructure appeared to her owners to be far safer - they couldn't believe that free-board at sea is like a chin held up to a punch.

We sailed on through the canal, the Stuart burning away all the oil in the crankcase which had collected in the afternoon. The canal was tremendously high up now. The chimneys of the factories which had towered over us previously were now below us and astern. To starboard the hills were becoming mountains. To port the valleys were hundreds of feet below. Below us stretched acres of open cast mining, interspaced with valleys of rural Lancashire. The view was magnificent. We passed quite a few pleasure craft now - obviously other people must realize the magnificence of the canal.

At 1900 hours we made Chorley, passing "Botany Bay" and mooring to a barge converted to a ferry, we cooked a meal. If any reader ever passes through Chorley, drop in at the Railway Inn for first class beer and company. Nick and I put back a very happy gallon apiece there in very pleasant company. We met one chap who used to work the canal in the days of horse drawn barges - he used to start work at two in the morning to reach Liverpool by sunset! Apart from yarning with him we must have talked and drank with everyone in the pub. Nick is a little sceptical of northern taverns as a rule, but even he was impressed with the beer and the clientel.

The next day, a Friday, we sailed for Nelson, passing through several small villages and industrial towns, but mainly through countryside. Canals, in contrast to popular belief, do not connect gasworks with glue factories in straight lines. They spend about nine tenths of their time in rural surroundings.

That day was uneventful except for a genuine compliment on the speed of our locking from an experienced canal enthusiast. He wondered why we came into locks so fast until I told him that we had no astern gear to slow us down! Nelson was a poor drinking place, but we could do with a drink after literally sailing over the top of Burnley on a magnificent aquaduct. The view from this engineering masterpiece is magnificent as the feeling of drama. One comes, after being hemmed in by warehouses, tunnels and cuttings into a huge sense of open space where the lane is your lowly maiden instead of a dominating master.

After victualling we set off for the summit. The Pennines were about us now as we came through the last lock up to the highest navigation in Britain. Not many sea-going craft have been nearly five hundred feet above sea-level.

On reaching the top pound Deva oozed with pride as she was complimented on by the lock keeper and his wife. They said they had seen one similar to her (but not so nice) come through several months ago. I thought this was strange - not many nobbies pop over the Pennines for a spot of fishing - but I found out that they were right when we sailed into Boston.

A few miles further on we salvaged a beautiful tyre. I gleefully made a lanyard and fastened my new found possession over the topsides. The fender quota was barely plus one for ten seconds before Deva plunged into darkness with a sickening crash and lost another fender! We had hit the Foulridge tunnel with a vengeance. I dived below for a torch while Nick throttled her down. The torch was not powerful enough to pierce the misty gloom. The end of the tunnel was not visible. The only guess to our position was a beam thrown on the side of the tunnel. So with the torch aimed abeam we steered Deva a foot from the starboard side, set the throttle at half speed and prayed no other craft came the other way. We wouldn't be able to see them on account of the glare from our own torch - even if we could we couldn't stop to avoid a collision - and the canal was a mere fourteen feet wide.

Jon Wainwright.

A further instalment in our next issue.

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IN GRANMA'S WAKE

The first time I saw Girl Stella was in Honfleur, just after she had won the Tom Bolton Memorial Trophy in the East Coast Old Gaffers' Race. She was a fine old boat, and the owner was interesting too. Not long after that I read Terschelling Sands and thought it one of the best cruising books to be written for a long while. I must have re-read the account of his near-shipwreck several times by now. One day this Spring, Frank came into my office with a bulky package and an interesting proposition; he wanted me to publish his new book, on his trip to Cuba. Although it is out of my usual line of publishing, I felt it was too good to miss. The result, a new imprint - Seafarer Books - and In Granma's Wake. For those who are now off to the Public Library to reserve a copy, I give details; for those who mean to do the handsome thing and get their wives to give it to them for Christmas, there is a tear-off form. If you send this (with the money) to John Scarlett, the profits will go to the O.G.A.

Details. In Granma's Wake; Girl Stella's Voyage to Cuba. By Frank Mulville. Demy 8vo 302 pp + 16 pp illustrations + two pull-out maps. Price 45s. Publication date 22nd October. Published by Seafarer Books, a division of The Merlin Press, 11 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.

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