

No 11

1966/1



OLD GAFFERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 1966/1

First, a welcome to the following new members;-

- D.J.Barlow, Meon Croft, Hambledon Road, Denmead, Hants.
Sea Waggon
- Dr.P.W.Clements, 20, Harbour View Rd., Poole, Dorset
Gairloch
- R.T.Dale, Riverside, Mill Lane, Walton on Naze, Essex
Kestrel
- J.C.Dekker, Les Authieux, St.Andre, Eure, France
Artemis
- J.V.Derrick, 39/41, Old Turnpike, Fareham, Hants.
Storm
- F.Driscoll, 73, Warwick Gardens, London, W14
Dilkusha
- M.Erally, 2, Rue Beethoven, Paris 16, France
Artaban
- V.J.Fuller, 8, Gillingham Green, Gillingham, Kent
Foam
- A.T.Goodbourn, St.Margarets, Bradwell Waterside, Essex
Spartan
- A.Grimble, Selig Cottage, Priory Lane, Church Norton,
Chichester, Sussex
Amelia Jane
- A.F.Judge, Tops'ls, Dumont Ave., Point Clear, St.Osyth,
Essex.
Roma
- Cmmdr.A.R.T.Kirby, O.B.E., R.N.R., A.R.I.N.A., Bishops Quay,
St.Martin, Helston, Cornwall.
Lizzie Doy
- R.M.Lane, Springflower, Cobbs Quay Ltd., Hamworthy, Poole,
Dorset
Springflower
- Dr.A.G.MacKenzie, Brimpton House, Kelvedon, Essex
Young Alert
- C.V.Major, Wynhurst, Deeside Ave., Fishbourne, Chichester,
Sussex
- A.F.Miller, Wide Views, Tolpuddle, Dorchester, Dorset
Dinah
- E.Newton, Glenthorne, The Mall, Brading, Sandown, I.O.W.
Palan
- S.Parent, 2, Rue Beethoven, Paris 16, France,
Artaban
- M.Seel, PinMill Sailing Co., Clamp House, Pin Mill, Ipswich,
Suffolk
Where be Tu
- H.E.M.Thorpe, 183, High Lane West, West Hallam, Derbyshire
Black Peter
- A.D.Vivian, 5, Posthole Crescent, Highlands Gardens, Fareham,
Hants.
- P.Vois, 63, Avenue Raymond Poincarre, Paris 16, France
Steredon-Mor
- I.D.Waterfall, Dagley Farm House, Shalford Common, Near
Guildford, Surrey
Byrony
- M.J.A.Wilson, 5/8, Thrnton Avenue, Streatham Hill, London,
S.W.2
Madeleine
- J.A.Woodford, Clacton Road, St.Osyth, Essex.

It will be noticed that we have a growing French section.
It is hoped that as many members as possible will join the
Whitsun Rally at Le Havre to meet them.

LE HAVRE - WHITSUN

Will all members intending joining this
rally please write to W.D.Robinson, Afzelia, 8, The Rookery,
Emsworth, Hants., giving name and address, name of boat,
number in crew, and whether they wish to sail independently
or rendezvous at the Nab Tower at about 2030 Hrs. on the
Friday (May 27th.) Also, if any owners need more crew,

H.M.S. Wessex has members who would be interested. Again, please inform Mr. Robinson. Members may wish to proceed to Le Havre by ferry to join the party, and any who do should also contact Mr. Robinson.

East Coast and Solent areas have both had meetings. There have been minor changes in the committees - Fiona Beale has left the Solent area to move to Cornwall, and Brian Allen joins the committee. On the E.C., Race Treasurer Peter Mather is leaving Maldon, so Mervyn Morgan is taking over the job.

RACE DATES Have been settled. East Coast on July 16th, start at 12-30, and Solent on September 10th, start at 10-30. Due to rising costs the entry fee for the East Coast Race has been brought into line with that for the Solent event at £1. It is hoped to provide a launch service to ferry crews to and from the prizegiving after the E.C. Race. Our Vice President Capt. Banyard, has again offered the use of a motor barge for spectators. Cost of the day out will be £1. Please apply early. Full details of the races in the next issues.

Several members have moved recently, among them J.B. Holmes, who now runs the Boat Haven at Littleport, Cambridge, and who would be pleased to see any members venturing on inland waters.

BURGEEES 18" by 12" O.G.A. Burgees in nylon wool bunting, roped and toggled, at 15/- each, post free, cash with order, from W.D. Robinson. Larger sizes up to 36" by 24" on request.

BOATS FOR SALE

Storm - 6 ton topsail cutter, 26'4" by 8' by 3'. Built in 1908 by Hillyard. Apply J.V. Derrick, 39/41, Old Turnpike, Fareham.

Fishing smack Rosnea CK65. 34' L.O.A. Complete with all sailing gear and Lister 21 engine. Seen at Brightlingsea. Price £800 J. Lawrence, 2, James St., Brightlingsea, Essex.

Converted smack Edith, CK375. Built by Aldous in 1911. 34' OA. 28' WL. 9.3' Beam, 4.5' draft. New mast and rigging. 12 H.P. Lister new 1961, just overhauled. Price £850. C.H. Gurteen, Little court, Haverhill, Suffolk.

Myris; beautiful old gaff cutter built by W.S. Thomas of Falmouth in 1895. 33' OA. 30ft. WL. 8'6" beam, 6' draft. Sails good - main '64 Lucas, stay '65 Daniels, variety of good jibs. Type A Brit in good cond. 30ft. chain & 2 fisherman anchors. Bowsprit new and other spars good. Rigging deadeye and lanyard. Standing & running rigging good. Accommodation 1 double bunk, 2 single bunks, Baby Blake, gimballled primus, sink, large water and fuel tanks. Unusually good stowage space as redesigned to live aboard. Seen Falmouth. Miss F. Beale, The Garage, Porth Navas, Falmouth, Cornwall.

Valerie 16 ton cutter built 1895 by Shaw of Shoreham. 46' OA. 10.2' Beam, 6' draft. Engine 4 cyl 36 HP. Parsons diesel, new 1964. Sleeps 6; roller reefing; W/T cockpit; Edson wheel steering; dinghy; echo sounder; Pye D.F.; two compasses; calor cooking; electric light; full inventory. Schooner bow, counter stern; 3 ton lead keel & lead inside; pitch pine on oak, copper sheathed. S.L. Winch. £4,000 Cmmdr. A.R.T. Kirby, Bishops Quay, St. Martin, Helston, C/nwall.

OTHER ADS.

Crew wanted (young lad) for bawley sailing from Leigh on Sea, Essex. Experience not essential. Apply to L.D. Ascott, 36, Northside, Wandsworth Common, London, S.W.18.

Wanted - mast saddle to fit 3" dia. gaff - mast 5" dia at hounds. Landricombe, 3, Shenstone Gdns., Honicknowle, Plymth.

PASSAGE RACE TO MEDWAY AFTER E.C. RACE → apply to Sec. if interested

MARESCA

Maresca, 123114. 11 ton cutter, designed and built by Luke at Hamble in 1906. Altered from yawl to cutter in 1939 and shortened by 2ft. in 1955. Owned by Cmdr. J.S. Clarke & J. Barker. Our President writes;-

"I have to report with some sadness the total loss of Maresca on the Hill Head shore on the 30th October last, during a final sail of my partner.

Apparently my partner with two others on board went down to Maresca on the 29th October with the intention of having a final sail of the 1965 season. They set off at 8 30 on Sunday morning without having heard the radio weather forecast, and, in particular, the gale warning issued for the Channel areas. The sail was uneventful, and having left the Hamble River Maresca was taken over to Ryde Pier, and was returning through the North East Brambles Passage. My partner was using the echo sounder and was running along the lee shore in 10 feet of water when quite suddenly Maresca struck the Rainbow Bar off the end of Titchfield Haven. The time was approximately 10 30 and at the time the wind was blowing from the South West, Force 3.

After having struck the bottom, sail was lowered and the dinghy launched and a kedge laid out in a southerly direction, on a long warp, which, unfortunately, was 6 feet too short to reach the capstan and, accordingly, another piece of line was bent on and the kedge taken to the capstan. The kedge anchor was the large 56 pound fisherman anchor which we carried for such emergencies, but unfortunately the short piece of line parted and we lost the kedge anchor and all the warp. Thereafter the engine was started and run astern but it had no effect. A light C.Q.R. anchor was then taken out astern on another line, but this anchor was too light and in the conditions of half flood tide and increasing wind velocity was quite unable to hold Maresca off. Thereafter the wind very rapidly increased and Maresca began pounding ashore over the hard sand in an area which has large concrete blocks and odd rocks projecting.

By noon the wind had reached gale force and the bumping on the bottom was becoming serious and Maresca began taking water as a result of underwater damage. She was driven further ashore and eventually where the beach slopes upwards at a steep angle she came to rest 10 yards off shore. Thereafter the seas began breaking over her and her port side took a tremendous pounding against the hard shore. She began filling with water and all the gear was taken out of her by the splendid efforts of the local inhabitants. The tide reached its highest point at approximately 3 30 p.m. and by this time the hull was taking a tremendous pounding. By 7 30 or 8 0, when the tide had made off, we carried out an inspection of the hull with a view to making salvage attempts during the night tide, but it was obvious that all the port side frames had been fractured and the planking, although intact, had been forced wide apart and there was a great deal of sand in the ship. It was obvious that no salvage was possible, and during the night the fury of the gale completed its task.

During the following day we were able to remove the mast, rigging, engine, and everything that had any value, and on the following day the 3½ ton keel was dragged ashore by a scrap merchant and sold for scrap. It was a sad end after 59 years, and it was interesting to note that the pine planking smelt fresh and new when being broken up. The oak frames, however, were not in quite such good condition. If there can be any lesson learnt from this experience it is that the "sea never forgives" and that the use of an echo sounder as a navigator is no substitute for sound navigational planning of a passage, and the use of an echo sounder should be as a navigational aid and not as a method of navigation.

Do any members want an almost new gaffers mast with winches, plus rigging and a set of terylene gaff sails? We

also have a very excellent lavatory and an almost completely reconditioned Stewart Turner 8 Horsepower engine for sale, which spent only 2 tides submerged and has been completely re-assembled the following day.

J.S.Clarke, The Roos, Whitchurch, Hants.

BRISTOL CHANNEL PILOT CUTTERS

One of our members, Mr.P.J.Stuckey, of 8, Tweeney Lane, North Common, Warmley, Bristol, is leading a movement trying to preserve the Bristol Channel pilot cutter Margeurite-T, one of the finest Victorian gaffers in existence.

Whilst we would prefer to see these old boats sailing, they can not sail for ever, and this chance to preserve such a vessel is one that may never occur again. Mr. Stuckey suggests that members of the O.G.A. could write to the Director of the Bristol City Museum, appealing to them to preserve the Margeurite-T. This is something all members could do. Any members who feel they could offer help in any other form to this project should contact Mr.Stuckey, who will be very pleased to hear from them. Mr.Stuckey has sent the following description of the Margeurite-T.

The name of one of the present Bristol Channel pilot cutters, George Ray, a fast power craft, is a memorial to the first licenced Bristol pilot, who, according to tradition in Pill, was the pilot of Cabot's ship. The Bristol pilots remain an independent body of men, although the pilot cutters and administration are provided by the Pilotage Committee of the Corporation. They serve their apprenticeship in the cutters as their forefathers did, but the pilots ceased to provide their own sailing pilot cutters about the time of the first world war.

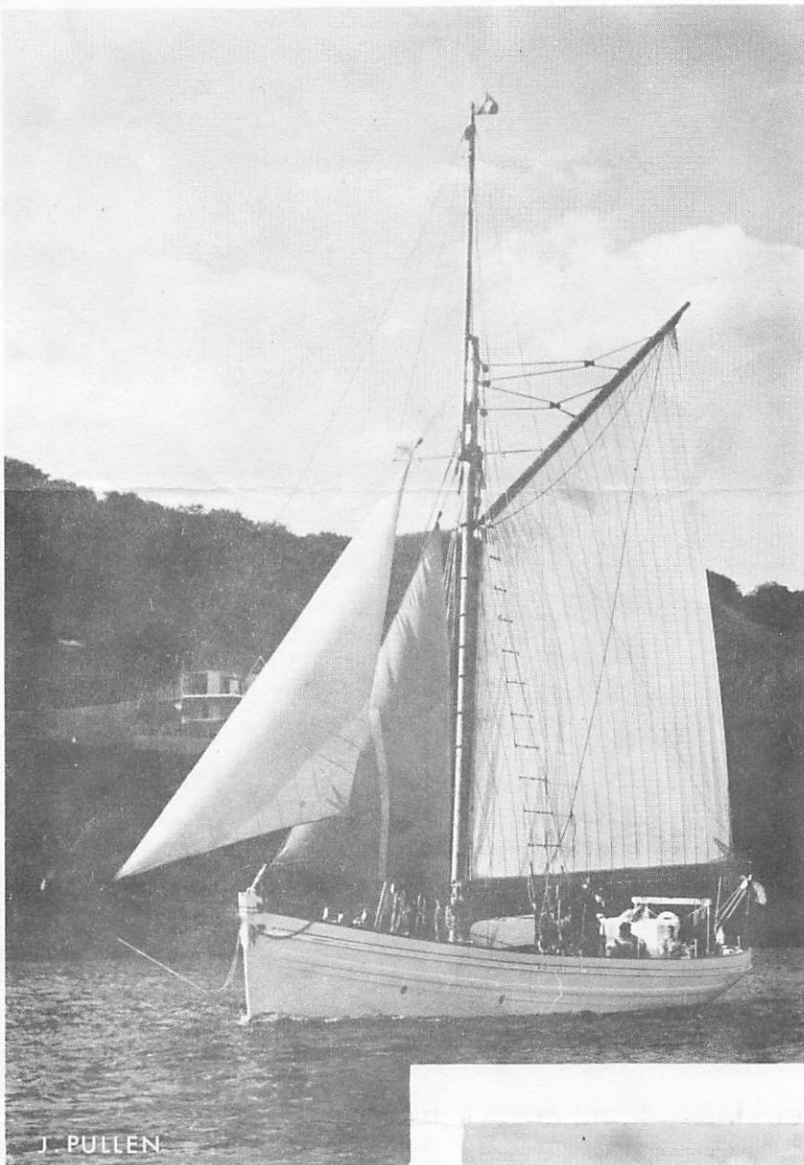
The Bristol pilot cutters were built at Pill on the Avon, and the yards there evolved over the centuries by trial and error and the experience of generations of men, who spent the best part of their lives at sea in the cutters, a distinctive type of craft. The skiffs, as they were known locally, were built from half models and never departed from the clean forefoot and deep heel which meant good sea-keeping in the sort of weather met with west of Lundy, and a tolerable motion for those on board. The cutters ranged far from the Channel seeking ships requiring pilots, going perhaps 100 miles west of the Fastnet, round to the English Channel or towards the Clyde.

Margeurite-T was launched at Pill on April 17th, 1893 having been built by Edwin (Cracker) Rowles, one of two builders then in Pill. The other was Cooper, who had the reputation for building the better sea boats, but Rowles' models were faster. Margeurite's owner was Pilot Frank Trott of Cardiff, who was a racing enthusiast, perhaps fanatic. The vessel's dimensions are;-

53 ft. overall,	45.8 ft. waterline,
13.6 ft. breadth,	9.0 ft. draft.

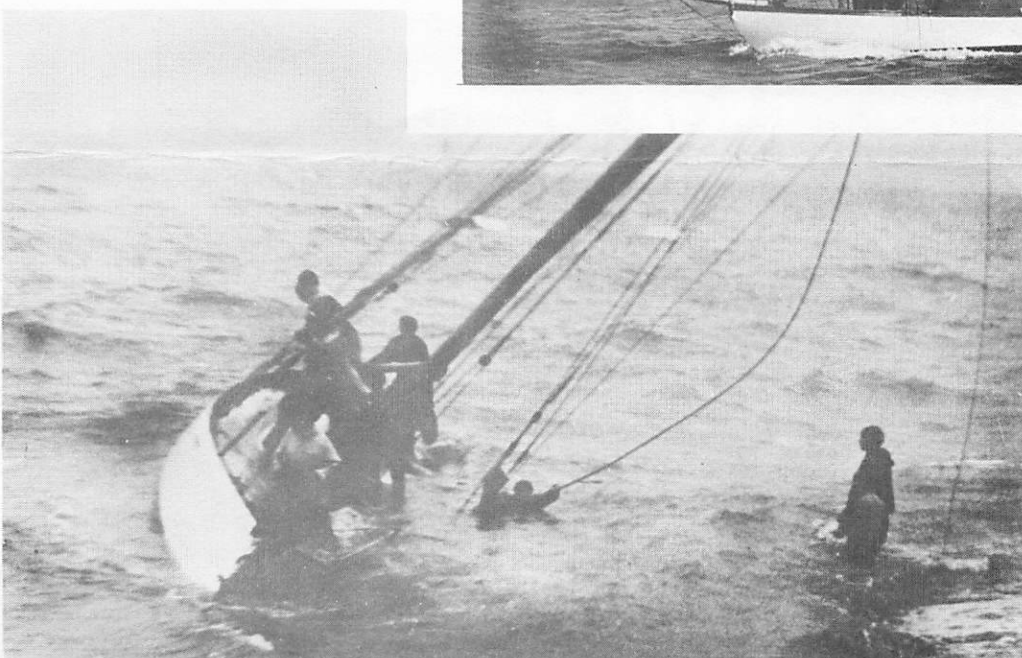
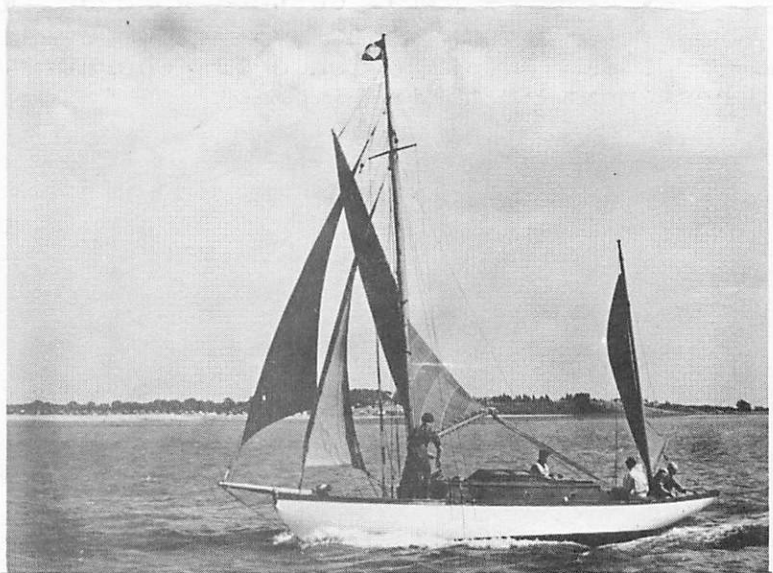
There is no doubt that Rowles made a special job of Margeurite. Unlike most cutters all the timbers and planking were beautifully finished and not straight from the adze. The saloon is comparatively elaborately panelled and fitted. Most of the original fittings, the pilot's saloon chair, the copper kettle in the galley, the water barricoes on deck, and the neat signal locker happily still survive.

On the bulkhead at the foot of the companion way is a brass plate recording the ship's regatta successes, including first at Cardiff in 1895, 1896, 1897, 1905 and 1907. Trott even recorded some occasions when he reckoned he was first and the committee did not! He certainly took racing seriously, setting a special mainsail for light weather with a boom projecting 6 ft. outboard, and dressing the racing crew in uniform.



MARGEURITE -T

FIREFLY



**MARESCA'S
END.**

Margeurite passed to the ownership of a clergyman in 1913, and between 1933 and 1948 was owned by Mr. Charles Milner of Birmingham, who has in his possession a silver model of her which was made for Trott by personal friends on the occasion of his marriage in 1903.

The present owner of Margeurite is Mr. Marshall Doran of St. Helier, Jersey, and for two seasons she has been operated for continuous summer cruising by the Island Cruising Club of Salcombe, where she lies at present. The ship has been maintained in good condition over the years and by good fortune has been little altered since she was built. Around the rudder head is a brass plate inscribed "Rowles - Builder - Pill - 1893".

Margeurite was one of the finest and fastest Bristol Channel pilot cutters ever built and is very probably the finest example of her class still in existence.

The last winter has seen an exodus of O.G.A. members from Europe, and our three transatlantic voyagers have all arrived safely. First to report in was Peter Tangvald, who is now building a gaff rigged schooner in French Guiana. He writes:-

"We had a slow passage (29 days) but a very pleasant one with clear skies and reasonably flat seas except for the last few days when the wind became very fresh indeed. Leaving Las Palmas we stopped in a little bay just a few hours sail away and there we stayed four whole days to scrub off the oil and filth of Las Palmas harbour. It is hard to describe how a filthy harbour can mess up a yacht but when we left Gran Canaria Island after those four scrubbing days we were greatly relieved to again have a clean ship. The first few days we had two sweaters on us and slept with three wool blankets, but as we sailed south the temperature became gradually warmer as the Stella Polaris sank lower down toward the horizon. By the time we came about half way we were in Bikinis! What a terrific feeling!

I think fresh air and a happy life is the very best of medicines, for far from arriving here worn out, my health has further improved, so nobody would suspect me to have ever been sick.

It is true that our arrival was a bit taxing on my nerves as the pilot book warns mariners that the charts around Cayenne are necessarily inaccurate because of the large deposits of mud the river carries far out to sea and it strongly recommends the use of the pilot who will come out to the lighthouse, 7 miles out to sea. However, we arrived at Carnival time and also in such terrible rain that visibility was down to a very minimum. I don't know which was the deciding factor, but no pilot came out to us. So after 18 rather uncomfortable hours in choppy seas and rain, my patience was gone and we sailed in on our own, I forward sounding continually while Simonne aft at the tiller followed my shouts of "right" or "left". At the shallowest we had only half a fathom under our keel which made us rather nervous especially as the seas were breaking. Needless to say we were very relieved when the water smoothed out and we finally anchored in front of the little town.

Despite the heavy and continuous rain we rather like it here and will stay here to build the new schooner. Next week I am sailing up the river with some Indians to look for some suitable trees as well as a place to build. It will take me two or three years. - - - - -

I am fascinated by the native sailing vessels (no motors) which come all the way from Recife and from Trinidad. They have very short masts but huge booms and gaffs, as well as long bowsprits. The gaff is peaked up so high that they could almost be considered gunter rigged. All inside ballast of stones when they have no cargo but when they do have a

cargo they have no ballast at all. Very shallow draft, fairly narrow beam and very fast. They also tell me that they are very seaworthy as they go out regardless of the weather as soon as they are loaded. No questions of weather reports, electronic gears or any of the other inventions which are making slaves out of the modern yachtsman. Well, that is all for now. All the best from Peter.

Next from the Griffin family who have reached Nassau with Northern Light.

"We arrived in Nassau at 25 minutes to midnight on the very day that we had promised to arrive, January 5th, after a most interesting and most varied five thousand miles and five months in our lives (which as you know have been interesting and varied enough already.)

Now our tired but proud old ship lies alongside her own jetty in the calm waters of the Hurricane Hole Yacht Marina on Paradise Island next to Nassau; coupled up to the land not only by ropes but by electric power cables, telephone lines and pressure water hose - over water so clear and clean that you dare not drop a single thing overboard as it would stare back at you with shame, and for ever, from the bottom.

Palm trees and Casuarina Pines throng the neat paved surround and only the limited few who own yachts here may gain access to our seclusion.

Ann is, for the moment, mistress of all she surveys on board, and renovates paint and varnish after the hard wear of the past few months, and catches up with household chores and stores. Geraldine and June are working as private secretaries, and Heather as the secretary of the local underwater diving company. Their salaries are phenomenal, and, of course, tax free! Linda Mary has started her studies at the Government High School, and loves it there; it is a magnificent school and quite close to the dump where I work. I am very fully engaged in teaching mathematics and engineering science and drawing to dark faces instead of pale; navigation to 80 yachtsmen and small boat navigators and operators; and lecturing to Rotarians and suchlike in odd moments (and for my supper!)

We are much entertained in other yachts and in friends houses - anyone would think that no one had sailed over from Europe to the Bahamas since Columbus did it - and the dust hasn't stopped swirling since we arrived! The publicity put out by the Bahamas Government, by the press and the radio has much to be responsible for, I expect, but in the meantime the girls are loving life in this famed Bahamian winter climate.

Our voyage, as you may know, started from Poole in Dorset on July 30th 1965, and in the following month we progressed down the Brittany, Spanish and Portuguese coasts to arrive at Las Palmas in the Canary Islands off North Africa twenty four hours before I was due to fly out here via London and New York to start my work in the Nassau Technical Institute.

We called at Roscoff, L'Aberwrach, Brest, Corrunna, Lage, Vigo, Bayona, Leixoes (Oporto) and Cascais (Lisbon and Estoril). Once clear of the English Channel the weather was fair and the following oceanic wind and current stayed with us from Cape Finisterre in North Spain for the rest of the voyage - all but the last eight miles.

I worked for the months of September and October in Nassau (taking a small part in the organisation against and during the hurricane 'Betsy' which struck the Bahamas in early September) while the family thoroughly enjoyed themselves and at the same time overhauled the ship and made her beautiful.

During this time many of this year's transatlantic yachts came through Las Palmas and the girls and Ann got to

know a very wide circle of yachtsmen of nearly all nationalities, and the girls also got to know a large number of Spanish boys.

On my return at the tail end of October we had Northern Light hauled out of the water, and after trimming up her copper sheathing, painted her bottom with antifouling to make her as smooth and as fast as possible for as long as possible. (As I write this she is still clean after a further 4,000 miles of sailing.)

We stored up as much as our dwindling funds allowed, and sailed on November 10th, passing round the northern end of Gran Canaria Island and leaving Tenerife on our western side. We were able to see the snowy peaks of Pico on this latter island for over 60 miles, showing proudly above the clouds that hung over the islands. Thereafter we saw no sign of mankind for 22 lovely days, then we saw the lights of a passing ship on the horizon aft. Two days afterwards a weather survey jet plane came down low and circled round us, and three days later we came upon Barbados ... 2,700 miles in 27 days.

During the passage we swam overside whenever the wind fell calm - the depth being $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles; we tried to catch fish and succeeded every 2,500 miles - yes, every 2,500 miles! The air and sea temperature were near perfect and the humidity low.

Ann and the three oldest girls were watchkeeping day and night (2 hours on duty on deck on their own and 6 hours off duty). Linda was the ship's cook and bottler washer while at sea, and I was on call at all times to navigate, to set and change the sails as necessary, and any other odd jobs that needed doing.

We thoroughly enjoyed the crossing and look forward very much to being able to do it again.

I had looked forward to returning to Barbados since visiting there in HMS Vindictive in 1938. We coasted along the beautiful green shoreline and dropped anchor with great elan off the Aquatic Club at Bridgetown. I jumped over the side for a ceremonial swim, and caught my knee on the ship's rail. The resulting Doctor forbade movement for as long as possible and while the family had a wonderful time ashore I was able to write letters and send off our Christmas cards for 1965. Our timetable was now getting shortened and we left (against the doctor's advice but with his blessing) after 6 days, sailing under perfect conditions across the 80 miles to St. Lucia and passing behind it to gain the maximum shelter. We passed in this way not only St. Lucia, but also Martinique with HMS Diamond Rock nearby, and Dominica, Guadeloupe and the Saintes, before crossing open water to find the concealed entrance to Nelson's old harbour - English Harbour in the island of Antigua. As my knee and lower leg now looked as if I suffered chronically from elephantiasis we stayed here 10 days until it had finally cleared up, and this included having Christmas and Boxing Day with the large fleet of chartering yachts based there. I had been there before the war and loved the spirit of the past which is still allowed to remain there.

Eric and Susan Hiscock in Wanderer III (who had crossed our path several times since leaving England) and several other old friends were also there. When we came to leave the weather was not only fine but also calm, and for three days we motored past Monserrat, Nevis, St. Eustatius and Saba and then for an open passage to the Virgin Islands.

Although I had been here before and knew how attractive the British Virgin Islands are, it was to American St. Thomas that we now steered, to enter the outstandingly beautiful port of Charlotte Amalie for an overnight stop to re-fuel and top up with fresh food.

From here on, for the last 700 miles of the voyage we had the only bad weather - some of the worst we have experienced in 20 years of sailing - although the wind remained behind us all the way. With our radios out of action by too much sea water we had no radio bearings and no time signals. There was little sun for latitude sights and the Dominican Republic was in the midst of a revolution and no one knew whether they were putting on lighthouses or not. For three days we sailed, nearly blind, between Puerto Rico, Hispaniola and Cuba on one side, and the Navidad Bank, the Silver Bank and the Turks Island and Caicos shoals and reefs on the other, but finally we came with great relief and happiness to the shelter of our first Bahamian Island, Great Inagu, and cleared Customs there.

On very much the last lap now, we pulled on again in the morning and sailed fast with the strong wind behind us and in slightly more sheltered water up through the Bahama Islands, we passed Crooked Island, Acklina, Rum Cay, Long Island and all the train of Exumas until we could cross the coral bank and drop our anchor in Nassau Harbour.

In a week's time Her Majesty and Prince Phillip arrive for a two day visit and we are to escort HMS Britannia into port, as the only English yacht here, and remain anchored near her during her stay; we attend the cathedral service with H.M. the same day, a prize giving by Prince Phillip in the afternoon and an investiture and reception at Government House on the Monday. Life just now consists of getting ship and clothes ready for this visit - the first by a reigning monarch to the Bahamas.

Now I must close - will be back in England briefly in 1968, God willing.

With the best wishes of all of us in Northern Light
James and Ann Griffin.

Our third wanderer is Steve Keefe of Sirius, who writes from Barbados:-

"By the time you receive this letter we will probably be in St. Lucia, B.W.I. We arrived here in Barbados after a crossing of 29 days, leaving Las Palmas on January 27th. It took us ten days of head winds and calms before we found the N.E. trades, which incidentally blew S. and S.E. for the majority of the time.

We sailed under a rather unusual running rig which I heartily recommend to any other trade wind sailors. It consisted of our two staysails, boomed from the main shrouds and sheeted back to the cockpit, with preventors going forward. In the gap between the stays we set our storm trysail hoisted on the jib halliard, the tack and clew being sheeted to the port and starboard shroud pin rails. We tried automatic steering a couple of times, but she really needs a drum on the steering shaft. We were becalmed a couple of times, and went over the side for a swim - leaving a couple of lookouts for sharks - which was very refreshing. There were always very pretty pilot fish under bow and stern.

The flying fish were pretty disappointing - we only caught three the whole trip, although we saw thousands. They didn't go far between six. Probably several fell back into the sea as we haven't any bulwarks. We caught three dorados though, which were delicious. The other wild life we saw were porpoise which appeared every so often in their dozens to escort the boat along. They have marvelous games amongst themselves. Dolphin by the score, which took no notice of us whatsoever, and a few whales, one of which appeared nine inches from the side of the boat and exchanged gurgling noises with our sink outlet! Birds were with us every day; terns, shearwaters and stormy petrels. Our first tropic birds were encountered a thousand miles from land, which, according to the books, meant we were 100 miles from land!

Our forty pounds of oranges lasted us only a fortnight, by which time the bananas had ripened. However, they nearly all ripened at once so that we really had to make pigs of ourselves with them. We've been making our own bread ever since leaving England so that was no problem. Unfortunately, we ran out of flour before making Barbados, and when we came to open our Finnish crispbread found they contained caraway seeds which everyone loathed! Spam, sliced thinly and fried, tastes remarkably like bacon, by the way.

Landfall was made in the early evening after five days of very strong winds and huge seas. They seemed to tower over the stern, but to our surprise none of them came aboard. Each time the stern lifted up like magic to allow the sea to pass under us and foam away in conflict with our bow wave. We had to close with the land in the dark, and guess what? After 29 days without rain we had a torrential rainstorm which blotted out everything. This happens to us whenever we enter harbour - first we get the squall, then the calm, then our engine refuses to start! True to form the engine died on us so we beat into the anchorage, neatly missing launches, yachts and buoys, and dropped the anchor in about 8 fathoms. It was a case of seeing where we were in the morning. The blessed stillness and quiet of that night's sleep!

Reading through this letter, it seems a funny place to start - at Las Palmas - so I might as well bore you still further and finish at the beginning. All good stories start at the end anyway.

We had the usual mad rush to leave Poole, but finally we had the food stowed, the new mizzen boom and topsail spar made, also the pulpit and aft rail complete, and we were off. It was a dead noser out to the Old Harry Rocks, then we had a good shake up in the race off there. The watches were worked like this;

3 men, 8 - 12, 12 - 4, 4 - 8
2 girls, 10 - 2, 2 - 6.

We all settled down quite well to this routine, and each took it in turn to be duty cook for the day. On a S.E. wind we broad reached down Channel. Forty miles off Ushant the wind died on us and we had to revert to the 'stinker'. There were 40 gallons of diesel aboard, so it didn't matter. Four days later, becalmed in Biscay, we heard all the force 10 storm warnings for the South Coast, so we were lucky to have missed that lot. We were in quite a bad blow off Finisterre, which cost us a torn jib. Arrived in Vigo after nine days at sea, very tired. It is very difficult to find the yacht club there especially at night, as it is not marked. A lot of people we talked to found this. However, when you've run out of wharves and jetties and are beginning to wonder if it really exists, there it is, folks! We stayed in Vigo for nearly three weeks, where it rained nearly all the time, and blew hard from the South West.

On November 24th, one month after leaving Poole, we cleared Vigo in glorious sunshine and made for Portimao in Portugal where we have some friends. We had been warned of the offshore Portuguese fishing activities on the West Coast. They work a system of long lines with buoys and lights - which to say the least are very confusing at night. Quite harmless when you get used to them though, as the bit you could get tangled up in is lying in about fifty fathoms.

After three days of indifferent wind and calms we had a good blow from the west and we soon passed the Burlingame Islands. All along this coast we kept about fifteen miles off shore, just within range of the major lights. Cape St. Vincent must be one of the busiest corners of the world. It was very squally, and reminded us of Piccadilly circus in the rush hour - in fog! Ships everywhere.

Portimao harbour was entered in our usual rainstorm, but it passed over quickly enough. The channel is exceptionally twisty. We were amazed to see people walking ankle deep, twenty feet from the boat in what appeared to be

deep water. A man and a donkey were seen trotting across the sand bar! The returning fishermen were very helpful, and guided us through the channel, and we finally dropped the hook fifty yards from the bridge. It had been very nice ghosting slowly up there under just the main and staysail - plenty of time to see what was going on. Not the sort of place to enter at night though. We stayed there until the 15th December, and were sorry to leave. The hospitality shown us by the people was wonderful, even though we had heard that a lot of Portugese were anti-British. As for the town - that is as yet unspoilt by tourists and retains all its character in consequence.

On the way to Las Palmas we listened with smug faces to 'your' weather forecasts, as the days were getting warmer and warmer for us.

I had decided not to use the log any more as some big fish kept taking the spinner. Alegranza was sighted on the 5th day. We had taken bets on who would sight land first, and Pete had overrun his early morning watch by a couple of hours, hoping to be the winner. At last, red eyed, he crawled into bed and had only been there five minutes when Sue yelled "Land Ho!" The wind blew hard and we had a very exhilarating sail through the islands to Las Palmas. Just made it in time for Christmas. On the last leg I had the unique experience of sailing 'Sirius' by Sirius.

Amongst the yachts in Las Palmas were 'Nomad', a Colin Archer cutter owned by a friend of ours, and 'Dorothea' owned by Peter Tangvald, whom I'm sure you've all heard of. John Guzzwell of 'Trekka' and Tzu Hang' fame arrived later with his wife and twin boys on their yacht 'Treasure' which he built himself. What a beautiful job he's made of it too.

We had Christmas with all the trimmings, although our Christmas tree looked a bit brown after being in the counter for a year. New Year's Eve was seen in the traditional manner, only more so, as the cars and buses join in with the boats to 'toot' it in. After a bout of 'flu all round - Peter Tangvald and his wife also had it - we decided to go up the slip for a repaint and to recaulk the garboards. It was very cheap. This depleted our tiny hoard of money still further, so that when a Swedish chap asked for a passage to Barbados we jumped at the chance. His main luggage consisted of two boxes of assorted liquor (His boxes of despair as he called them!) We couldn't have two Peters aboard so we renamed him Pedro - not very Swedish, I admit.

Pedro insisted on sharing watches, and as we were all well and truly used to the old lady's ways, we did 2½ hours on and 10 hours off, with the girls sharing a night watch. This worked excellently.

Well, this brings us back to Barbados. The Customs asked a very curious question - "Are your rats and mice free from disease?"

The West Indies must be the last stronghold of sailing ships. We were delighted to see working boats with new sails bent on. In the harbour are many trading schooners - beautiful shapes and all still in commission. Also there was a 100 ft. schooner from Nantucket, obviously being used for charter. This really is a paradise for sail, and we're looking forward to seeing the other islands. If this letter hasn't bored you to tears we'll write again when we've seen a bit more.

S. G. Keefe.

I hope all members have enjoyed reading these letters as much as I did. It has been a very pleasant change to have to "crowd" a Newsletter to get in all the material that could not really wait for the next issue, and I hope it will not be the last we shall be hearing from our transatlantic voyagers.

Hope to see as many as possible of you at Le Havre. J.A.S.

Published by the Old Gaffers Association,
"Lawley", 70b, Farnbridge Road, Maldon, Essex.