



OLD GAFFERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 1966/5

First, welcome to the following new members;-

G. A. Beagley, 85, Burford Road, London, S.E.6

N. McGregor, Flat 3, 46, Wairiki Road, Mount Eden, Auckland,
New Zealand.

A Williams, 64, London Road, Southend on Sea, Essex
Saari

LONDON MEETINGS will be on Saturday, January 7th. First will be a party visit to the International Boat Show at Earls Court. Provided we have a party of more than twelve, admission will be at the reduced price of 4/- per head.

Rendezvous at Earls Court Station, at the end of the subway leading to the exhibition hall, near the foot of the steps down from the District Line platforms, at 10 45 a.m.
for 11 O.

Rendezvous point for members arriving at the show later and entering independently - the bar at the southern end of the Mezanine floor where the Marine Artists exhibition is held. (The hall faces East.)

It is hoped that Mr.V.A.Hammond will have a painting of this year's East Coast Old Gaffers Race on display in the Marine Artists Exhibition.

Annual General Meeting at the R.N.V.R.Club, 38, Hill Street, London W1 at 7 0 p.m. for 7 30.

There will be a buffet supper at 17/6 per head. Tickets for this must be ordered by January 2nd from the O.G.A. Secretary, Lawley, 70b, Farnbridge Road, Maldon, Essex.

Members requiring overnight accommodation in London should contact the O.G.A.Secretary immediately, giving a telephone number for replies.

The Agenda for the meeting will be;-

- 1 President's opening address.
- 2 Secretary's report.
- 3 Treasurer's report.
- 4 Discussion on rallies.

The following proposal will be put to the meeting;-

That the Association should endeavour to arrange for an Old Gaffers Association Rally to be held in a foreign port each year.

That each year, in rotation, the port chosen should be one convenient of access for members in the different areas in which the Association is active.

That each year when the Association Rally is at a port difficult of access to the members in any area, the committee in that area may arrange for a rally to a port nearer their own area for the benefit of their members who can not get to the Association Rally. This rally may be on the same date as the Association Rally.

- 5 Any Other Business.

As the date of the meeting is so close to the end of our financial year, it will not be possible to present members with the final balance sheet for 1966, but the general financial state of the Association, and the estimates for 1967 will be presented.

To get to the R.N.V.R.Club;- From Earls Court - Piccadilly Line Underground to Green Park; cross Piccadilly, up Berkeley Street to Berkeley Square. Hill Street is the turning off the western side of the square.

From Liverpool St. Station - Central Line to Bond Street; down Davies Street to Berkeley Square.

From Waterloo - Northern Line to Piccadilly Circus, change to Piccadilly Line to Green Park.

SOLENT AREA RACE - The 1967 Solent Area Race will be on Saturday, September 2nd.

TROPHY The silver plate which Mr.C.Tissier of the Societe des Regattes du Havre presented to Fred Hillier at this year's Whitsun Rally is to form the prize for a passage race to Poole next year.

NEWSLETTERS Arrangements are being made to have re-prints of the earlier issues of the Newsletters made available for members. They will be in complete year's sets, omitting such things as race entry forms which were sent out with the originals. It is hoped to be able to announce the price per set in the next issue.

All members receiving this Newsletter are entitled to have the full set for 1966. If any member did not receive any issues, I will send them the missing ones if they let me know. Nos. 2,3,&4 are in stock, and will be sent by return post, but there will be some delay in sending out No.1, which must be re-printed.

As there does not appear to be any more Association news this issue, all that remains before getting down to some articles is for me to wish all members all the very best for Christmas, and the best of sailing in 1967.

J.A.Scarlett.

CHIRIYA RETURNS TO THE SOLENT

Ownership.

Borstal! I ended up in Borstal during my search for a boat. An escape was effected, however, for both myself and the boat - which had been there for an 18 month stretch. Hiding under the alias of Judith, when I met her, Chiriya had been advertised in Yachting Monthly and turned out to be a 24 foot 6 ton, Itchen Ferry, gaff cutter.

The boatyard was off the main road through the bleak and dismal Borstal village down a steep, narrow lane to the edge of the Medway river. The day was cold, with traces of snow, so my stay was curtailed to allow only an accelerated inspection. Inside the boat I poked around, without finding signs of trouble, using a fork - part of a full inventory which showed that the ship had been laid up very soon after she had been re-fitted. She was almost ready for sea, requiring only a check over her rigging and engine.

Confusion over the sails brought me back to the Medway for a second time. This time I was convinced that I should have this boat, Judith. On my first visit I was impressed by the stability and solidness of the craft, straining at the mooring lines on the high tide, as I stood on the expanse of her foredeck. Now I also noted she also had the room and comfort together with the seaworthiness for which I was looking.

Having started to list the reasons for my choosing to buy Judith, I find that they sound unconvincing. Why did I really decide? Did I decide? I have a feeling, now, that the ship made the decision. I was the one chosen - selected to be the owner of the vessel which was to affect and control most of my life in the future. I met and satisfied the ex-owner and was now the proud owner of the yacht Judith, ex Chiriya, my first boat.

Organisation.

With experience, gained aboard the old Daedalus mostly in the Solent, plus round trips to Cherbourg and the West Country, I was now to bring my own boat round from the Medway to the Solent. The obvious time for this passage was the Easter weekend when the spring tides would give greatest speed over the land and also ensure that we got Judith out of the mud.

In Rochester once more, the weekend before Easter saw me making arrangements for overhaul of rigging, bending on the sails, ordering provisions, and also making a vain attempt to move Judith out of the mud. Even with the engine (which functioned with very little persuasion!) and all hands heaving she refused to shift and would need the higher tides later in the week.

Back in the Isle of Wight, organising continued and the crew matter was sorted out when Ray Newton and his wife Betty were venturous enough to want the positions.

During the course of my preparations I received quite a number of suggestions and gratuitous information regarding the many hazards which may be expected on the passage. In particular in the public bar which serves as the canteen and social club of our local yacht yard, I was treated to some frightening tales of the conditions likely to be met at the North Foreland, particularly if the wind was in the north east.

Crew to Ship.

Everything ready and all set to leave - it was hoped. On arrival in London, an hour later than planned due to my having to return home for the charts, I rang up the Air Ministry to obtain their views on the weather. Forecast: wind - East, Force 4 or 5, backing to north east; Force 6 or 7; rain and sleet; moderate visibility with mist patches. We had a drink in the buffet, thought about the N. Foreland and hoped they were wrong. The familiar journey to Rochester took longer than usual, possibly due to the forecast sleet. My plan was to take advantage of the midnight high water, that evening, to move off down river and moor or anchor close above the bridge at Rochester, to be ready early next morning to negotiate the obstruction soon after low water. Then down to the river entrance just right for the start of the ebb and a fair tide clear around the coast to Dover.

That was the outline of my prepared plan of action and the first step from the train was to be a taxi to the boatyard. The taxi was taken, but the destination was changed with little hesitation - the main reason being that the time was after 11 p.m. (2300) and it was snowing hard! The new objective was, of course, the Kings Head Hotel once again.

Good Friday morning - bright and dry: the snow had been washed out by the following rain. From the pleasant dining room I observed that the weather vane on the cathedral had ceased to function. Strangely coincident, the one on the castle was also faulty. Both indicated westerly winds and their correctness was only realised when the smoke from a factory chimney also defied our weather experts.

We breakfasted well, finishing with an abundance of hot cross buns - some of which we saved to eat afloat. To the boat. Now then, high water Dover, still G.M.T. plus the tidal difference - 12 40. We would be able to move down river and come ashore at the pier to pick up the baggage from the hotel. This course we adopted, some additions to my provisions were made, gear stowed and generally the ship set in order. After a last look at the chart of the River Medway in the boatyard office, we said farewell to the helpful people there and Chiriya was under way for the first time in many a month.

Under Way.

It took half an hour to motor round the wide bends to the pier at Rochester where we found a vacant mooring. After bringing off the remaining stores from the hotel in the new dinghy, we sat and considered at close quarters the first of our

hazards - the bridge. We had to wait for low water to obtain head room. The depth would then be just about sufficient for our four foot draught but I had heard stories about the ancient ford and stumps which were relics of an old bridge, just above the present structure. The theories and stories would be tested soon.

Patience ran out at 18 30. We let the mooring go and moved slowly down on the bridge with the current and under power. Approaching the bridge on the ebbing tide, we attempted to compute the clearance by continuously changing trigonometric guesswork. Luckily the answer was a clearance of about four feet and we passed rapidly through the central archway. Now down the river passing all the lighters, the laid up summer pleasure craft, and the Naval installations of the Dockyard. We covered the measured mile in $7\frac{1}{2}$ minutes ($5\frac{1}{2}$ knots estimated speed, allowing for the tide) and made an effort to check the compass against bearings (noted from the chart before leaving) as we were overtaken by the gloom of the darkening evening.

The buoyed channel guided us between the contrasting banks of the river, with the huge installations and oil jetties to port and the darkness of the marshes away to south. In the wideness of the estuary at Sheppey we discovered the lights of numerous anchored vessels. After closing with one or two of these unknown ships and with suitable anchorage not being evident, we finally selected one which looked fairly hospitable and we brought up alongside. She was a small R.E. tanker and the sound of our boarding disturbed the caretakers in their quarters below.

These helpful gentlemen showed us where we could find water and promised to take ashore a wedding greeting telegram for us.

The first night aboard Chiriya proved quite comfortable for me, up in the fo'c's'le. It rained and I am afraid that the two main berths received some water that found the leaks in the deck. Betty and Ray were very kindly moderate in their comments when their damp night was changed into a damp morning. Damp drizzle on a windless day. The inhospitable shore at Sheerness was only just visible and the far side of the river was hidden by mist.

To Sea.

We remained alongside the tanker for just twelve hours and cast off under power, in the thick drizzle, at 11 30 on Easter Saturday, hoping for a change in the weather with the turn of the tide. At Garrison Point visibility improved and we were on the chart. We could now plot our position. As the buoys of the fairway passed some breezes became wind until, at the No. 4 Bar Buoy, we felt that it was worth setting sail reaching to a light northerly breeze, heading across the Cant Sands for the Spile buoy. The rain had ceased. The boat trotted gaily along - Ray on the helm and the first of the fair ebb under us. I was sick. The first and last time (I hope) as skipper of my own ship. Apples and biscuits effected a cure.

Visibility now improved to enable us to see, away to the north, the Red Sand Tower and to be ready to find the Spile, where the course was changed to take us down to the Columbine Buoy at the back door of Sheppey Island - the Swale entrance. This was the 'overland route' without doubt. At the time I was unaware of the dangers associated with this passage but have since seen an account of a similar passage noting the advisability of avoiding this route on a falling tide. We were on a falling spring tide! It was just as well that we were there early, at the start of the ebb.

Near the Columbine the breeze freshened and we made as good speed as a motor cruiser out of the Swale. At the last in the Horse Channel the wind dropped and the cruiser drew away, until she had engine trouble. We overtook her at the Margate Hook just as they got under way again. She was, if I have it right, the Queen Anne - bound for Littlehampton. The wind failed and the motor was commissioned as we passed close to the Margate Sands.

Here, as we were carried swiftly along on the tide I was puzzled by an unusual swishing sound which was soon connected with a newly forming popple on the surface of the sea some hundred yards away, to port. As I watched, this popple opened out into a ring with a smoother crater in the middle. The ring grew larger and then revealed itself as a drying sandbank coming up like a tummy in a draining bath. The presence of the S.E. Margate Buoy also to port was a welcome assurance that we were still in deep water.

The lights of Margate began to appear as the motor pushed us forward to Longnose, the buoy marking the turn at the maligned North Foreland. We rounded the buoy at 1830 in a flat calm, at dead low water with the rock ledges standing up high in the evening light. The end of the east going tide from the Thames Estuary here sweeps around the corner to join with a south going stream and together they run down through the Downs to the Straits of Dover. Now, with not the slightest bother, we came round the north east tip of the coast of Kent to set course S 20 E, still under power and with the lights of Broadstairs opening up to the south. The night was a dark one and as we were tide borne rapidly toward the vicinity of the infamous Goodwins, the imagination began to find shadowy shapes in our path. "There - straight ahead! What's that dark patch? Looks like a sand Bank!" Ray went forward with the lead to find four fathoms of water, as was expected in our estimated position.

The presence of the numerous buoys on this shoal water coast gave the impression that we were in sheltered waters and the need for the considerations of the open sea tended to be forgotten. As we were favoured with quiet weather our buoy hopping along the Gull Stream passed easily. It could have been different had there been strong winds.

The wind did increase as we reached the Goodwin Fork when there was justification for resting the motor after a three hour run. We ran through the Downs with a light N.E. wind, rounded the South Foreland to enter the harbour at Dover at 22 00. In the Camber we made fast alongside an M.F.V., just eleven hours after leaving the tanker at Sheerness. The passage had been uneventful and but for the strangeness of the waters it could even have been boring. Now in harbour, the bunks were soon occupied and the soundness of our slumber may be gauged by the fact that the M.F.V. moved out during the night without waking the crew of Chirya.

Easter Sunday.

The weather was fair, with a fresh east wind making it rather cold. After breakfast Ray and Betty went off along the pier taking with them a can for petrol. I followed to catch them, after interviewing the customs and harbour officials. The latter made reference to the signalling system used in controlling the entrance to the harbour and the Camber. In this conversation I felt it prudent to remain non committal as the signals had been unnoticed the previous evening.

The attendant at the garage gave us the news that much of the road traffic in Kent had been stopped, on that Easter weekend, by heavy falls of snow. This was surprising, as we had not the slightest indication of this possibility whilst at sea. The North Easter which had carried us round the corner to Dover had it seems brought snow to the land.

After lunch on board, the motor was started and with the appropriate signal we passed out into the main harbour to set working sail in the fresh easterly wind. A beat out of the Eastern entrance under the guidance of the signal station and we were heading S.W. into a somewhat lumpy sea. Something had obviously gone adrift in the tidal calculations. A further error was discovered before we had gone very much further. The dinghy was in danger of taking off on a course of its own and in attempting to draw it closer to secure a second painter I inadvertantly cast it adrift altogether.

Dinghy hunting - in the close season ! Not my first experience of chasing an errant tow around a wind swept Channel, but this is not a sport in which practice counts for much. Luff up, gybe round, bear away - try all the tricks and an inopportune wave will still take the quarry away out of reach. By the time we recaptured our stray the tide, against wind, had taken us well to the east. We turned, under power, with the South Foreland Lighthouse bearing due north and the 'angle off' about 30° , so it seemed.

Back in the Camber the remainder of the afternoon passed while the functioning of the engine and the level of morale, both of which had suffered during the day, were restored to a more satisfactory condition. The arrival, by boat, of a gentleman with helpful information with respect to the tides restored some of the lost confidence. After one more meal in Dover we again rang the signal station and arranged a departure - for 19 00.

One reef in the main for luck and we were away at last, with the dinghy where it should be - lashed securely on the foredeck. Again the beat round the breakwater, this time to find a much more reasonable sea, and then course S 54 W for Dungeness, with the wind on our backs and the tide starting fair. The lights of Folkestone soon passed, away to the north, while to the south were the transient lights of the steamers. The cruising Pilot Vessel heralded Dungeness, which we passed at 23 30 with the sound of the breakers seeming frighteningly near.

The new course for Beachy Head was S 78 W - a broad reach. The weather was fine and with the wind astern, our eskimo garments, and the soup brewed by Betty all things were well aboard Chiriya on Easter Monday. So fine was the sailing that watch keeping was imprudently eschewed. Betty turned in, but we, the males, carried on - observing the lights of the towns of Sussex slipping by, and identifying the sea-lights, both moving and static.

Dawn, 05 30, Beachy Head one mile due north lighting up with the day, and the cliffs running to the west, to the Seven Sisters and the indistinct entrance to Newhaven. Now, with time running out, a destination was to be fixed. Shoreham, Littlehampton - hardly any further. With no sleep and not much tide left the Solent was out of range. The course set, from Beachy N 70 W, took us up into the bight of the coast around Brighton. A final choice of harbour could be made later on in the day. Now I managed to take a couple of hours nap whilst Ray carried on to enjoy, I believe, the rise of the sun.

When I rose again, we had moved on to change the aspect of the cliff line and, closer in to the shore, there was visible a black hulled gaff rigger heading east. Before reaching Beachy Head she turned and appeared to go up into Newhaven. This was the only sailing craft seen in the whole passage except for one out for a Sunday sail in Dover harbour.

An error in identification of a buoy and the resulting course change to give a little more southing was discovered when a fix was obtained on Worthing and Littlehampton. Now conditions were different. The wind had backed to northerly, and the tide had started to run to the east. We changed course again to fetch straight to the entrance to Littlehampton, still making better than four knots in the fresh breeze and also starting to make a little water. Rapidly hauling up toward the coastline, the harbour entrance at Littlehampton became clearer to the tiring eyes that watched for the marks and the tower.

The west pier of piles and the stakes to the east were surrounded by a boiling, confused little sea and the tide was running, swirling across the entrance from the east. Under the lee of the land the wind dropped down to leave us relying on the motor and with the helm a-port we crabbed in across the tide, through the awful cauldron of foot high crests at the entrance. Within the entrance the flood ran us in, giving only just time in the narrows for Ray on the lead to find two fathoms or more, receiving reassurance in a hail from the quay.

We brought up alongside the wooden piled quay, near the Harbour Master's offices, at just about high water, 13 00. This quay dries out on spring tides so we moved, later on, to accept the hospitality of Mr. Hillyard and moored alongside Gillaroo to lay there for a week. The sail from Dover had been most enjoyable, 80 miles in 18 hours, and made up for the discomfort and the demoralising effect of the false start.

After stowing gear and setting things straight below and on deck, we stepped ashore from Chiriya and trudged round to the station to mingle once more with the thronging life of a bank holiday Britain. On the station the cold made comfort remote. The eskimo garb was impracticable for the mobility required in catching a train. The shedding of the thicknesses had its effect on the body. Even the warmth of the Southern Electric was not so sufficient as duffles and flying jacket, sweaters, etc. in the cockpit with the wind on the transom.

Home to the Solent.

The following weekend Chiriya was to sail again on the waters of the Solent. Home again to the seas in which she started her days, after an absence of over six years on the East Coast. For the passage from Littlehampton I was accompanied by my friend Eric Stillwell; whose name (it has just occurred to me) is a promising one to have aboard ship. We arrived at the boat to find her comfortable in the berth we had found for her, at the end of the run from Dover.

An early start on Sunday morning was the programme. This would give some hours of fair tide to Spithead, where we would be bound to meet some opposing current. After making preparations for the departure - timed for 07-00 - we went ashore to explore the little town at the mouth of the Arun river.

"Sunday, April 13th, 08 30, after breakfast, cast off from Gilardo and motored out of Littlehampton on the first of the ebbing tide, setting full sail as we went." So reads the log. Clear of the breakwater we laid a course, S 70 W, for the Looe channel to find ourselves running before a fresh N.E. breeze, on a bright cold morning. Once more the old boat was romping along the South Coast of England, as if she knew that she was heading for home.

Two hours for the first ten miles to the Mixon, which we left close to starboard. The new course for the Looe - due west. The twin buoys of the channel were elusive at first - the cliffs of the Island appeared before they were found. By 11 00 we were clear of the Looe with the Solent fairway open before us. The wind had veered a little giving a reach up to the forts of Spithead. These we passed soon enough and then made a slight detour to pass close by the pier at Ryde, as a form of salute to the Island as we approached.

The foul tide was unnoticed as the Peel Bank and Osborne, then Old Castle passed quickly. Off the Yacht Squadron we finished the run with a gybe round the No. 4 Buoy. Heading up the harbour of Cowes, the motor assisted us up through the floating bridge narrows to the moorings above the old gasworks. The passage from Littlehampton ended, after thirty two miles, in six hours exactly. A fine piece of sailing, appropriate to the return of a homeward bound ship, and satisfying to her new owner, brought Chiriya back to the Solent.

T. FitzPatrick.

I hope other members will have enjoyed reading this account as much as I did. In fact, I hope they will have enjoyed it so much that it will make them decide to send an account of one of their own cruises. So far, we have managed to keep the Newsletters up to a reasonable size. Their success in the past is due to the contributions by members, and their future also depends on what you send me to print.

J.A.S.

FOR SALE

Gaff rigged sloop 18ft x 7ft x 4ft6; Two Berth;
 1½ ton lead keel; 4 H.P. Stuart Turner with reverse gear box
 and reduction gear; completely re-rigged, new main and
 foresail; pram dinghy; anchors and chain; calor stove;
 Dunlopillo mattresses. Laid up at Chichester Yacht Basin.
 Owner buying larger gaffer. £250
 R.L.Pidduck, 4, Cobham Court Cottages, Cobham, Surrey.

5 Ton gaff cutter "Huckleberry Finn". Built by Lewis,
 Exmouth in 1924. Length 23ft. Horizontal keel. Draft 3 ft.
 (6ft with centreplate.) 4 berths, good headroom - sea
 toilet, calor cooker. 8 H.P. Austin Thetis engine with easy
 start impulse magneto completely reconditioned 1965 -
 new pistons (chrome rings), new bearings, valves and springs.
 New ball races throughout reduction gear and ahead/astern gear,
 not yet run in.
 New saloon, decking, ribs, keelbolts etc since 1962. New
 standing rigging 1966.
 Complete with all gear, roller reefing, fenders, sails, warps,
 anchor, navigation lights (oil), compass, canvas covers.
 Can be seen at T.H. Payne's boatyard, Emsworth. Phone
 Squadron Leader Tom Sawyer, Temple Bar 1207, Ext.998, or
 Bosham 2081. Genuine domestic reasons for urgent sale at
 sacrificial price of £450.

Mast, spars, sails;-

Mast - Oregon Pine, 230 lbs., for tabernacle stepped on deck
 length 30ft. 3 ins. 5 7/8 square at tabernacle; 24ft 6 to hounds.
 Complete with throat gallows, peak block Claude Worth type ring
 attachments, wireless ariel/lightening conductor with trident
 incorporated in alloy truck complete with 1¼ aft shrouds.
 £ 50 o.n.o. Parrel balls on terylene eye and toggles included
 if required.

Gaff - Spruce with oak jaws leather shod. Throat to sail head
 attachment 13ft 1 Mid spar dia. 3¼. £7 10 0.

Mainsail - Sound, 10 oz. tanned with Canvo. 335 sq.ft.

Luff 20ft6, Foot 17ft, head 12ft, leach 31ft. No battens for
 ease of stowage when cruising. Fitted for roller reefing.

Topsail - Luff 15ft sleeved for yard, foot 13ft. leach 7ft9.

Mitre cut, tanned with Canvo and proofed. Both sails for £30

Staysail - mitre cut, Canvo tanned, 133 sq.ft. with reef points.

Luff 26ft6, leach 21ft4, foot 12ft. £7 10 0.

N.B. Canvo colours, mildew and waterproofs sails.

Apply - Dr. J.C. Chartres, Westway, Hakin, Milford Haven,
 Pembrokeshire. Tel. Milford Haven 2052.

Essex County Constabulary

BOAT OWNERS

EACH YEAR THOUSANDS OF POUNDS WORTH OF PROPERTY ARE STOLEN FROM BOATS AND YARDS
ALONG RIVERS AND WATERWAYS IN THIS COUNTY.



OUTBOARD MOTORS, COMPASSES, ECHO FINDERS, BINOCULARS, RADIOS AND OTHER SIMILAR
PROPERTY, ALL NORMALLY LEFT ON BOARD, EVEN DURING THE 'CLOSED SEASON', ARE
ATTRACTIVE TO THIEVES. REMOVE PORTABLE PROPERTY WHEN VACATING YOUR BOAT.

NOTE SERIAL NUMBERS OF PROPERTY WHERE POSSIBLE, AS THIS WILL ASSIST IN IDENTIFICATION
SHOULD IT BE STOLEN. MARK OR ENGRAVE YOUR OWN PROPERTY IF NECESSARY. ALL SERIES
PRODUCTION BOATS ARE STAMPED WITH BUILDERS' SERIAL NUMBERS, NOTE YOURS.

MOOR DINGHIES SECURELY. REMOVE OARS AND ROWLOCKS.

USE GOOD QUALITY HASPS BOLTED THROUGH THE WOODWORK AND GOOD QUALITY CLOSE SHACKLE
PADLOCKS WHEN SECURING HATCHES, ETC. REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIONS TO YOUR POLICE
IMMEDIATELY, INCLUDING THE OFFER FOR SALE OF PROPERTY OF WHICH YOU HAVE SOME DOUBT.

Contact your local Police for advice

Crime Prevention Branch