

No 25

1968/5



OLD GAFFERS ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 1968/5

First, a welcome to the following new members:-

- L. Adams, Silver Birches, Brook Avenue, Warsash, Hants.
Curlew
- S. Adams, Silver Birches, Brook Avenue, Warsash, Hants.
Curlew
- G. W. Bendall, 1 Drakes Close, Golden Hind Park, Hythe, Soton.
Little Jennifer
- D. M. B. Cordingly, 70 New Oxford Street, London, W.C.1.
Jean Ann
- P. A. Crofts, "Briar Patch", Elm, Wisbech, Cambs.
Amity
- S. Hodges, 2 Durham House, Fieldway Crescent, London, N.5.
Black Duck
- M. P. Pick, Bishops, Cold Harbour, Weymouth.
Mari
- A. Storey, 59 Mayfield Road, Portsmouth.
Joan
- P. J. Willetts, 82 Pennine, 20 Coleman Street, Southend-on-Sea,
Essex. Boy Martin

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING This will be held on Saturday, 11th January, (last day of the Boat Show) at the Cruising Association Rooms, Chiltern Court, Baker Street, London N.W.1, (above Baker Street Underground Station) starting at 7 p.m. There will be the usual reports, discussion on races and rallies, and any other business. The business meeting will be followed by a colour film of the 1967 East Coast Race, and this will be followed by a demonstration of liferaft inflation by our Vice President, Capt. R. S. Banyard, of Liferaft Hire Company. The three parts of the evening will be separated by adequate periods for sampling the bar stock and nattering to other members. Please make an effort to attend this meeting - it is our one central function. Next year there will have to be some changes in our races, so come along and have YOUR say. Should we make name boards legible at a certain distance mandatory for all race entrants? This question may well come up at the meeting along with other points likely to affect ALL race entrants.

AREA MEETINGS The East Coast Area enjoyed their usual party at the Maldon Little Ship Club on Saturday 11th November. There was an excellent crowd present, despite very bad weather which discouraged several regulars with considerable distances to travel. As our President Alec Rangabe remarked after his drive down from Denmead, if the roads get much worse he'd contemplate sailing round next year! It was very pleasant indeed to have Alec and Kate with us for the party, and we all hope that in future years we shall see more members from other areas.

Main feature of the evening was the excellent 8mm colour film of our 1967 race produced by the Maldon Movie Makers. They have managed to make an excellent record of the peculiar atmosphere of our races, with excellent sound effects.

The film was followed by a very brief business meeting (it seems most O.G.A. members firmly believe in Parkinson's Law!). The 1969 race was settled for Saturday 26th July, starting at 11.30 a.m. B.S.T., one hour after high water, all arrangements to be as for this year. It was agreed that winners of the major trophies should be presented with a winners pennant (can anybody recommend a good supplier?) and that surplus race fund money

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should be used to finance the Maldon Movie Makers in the making of another film.

The usual buffet supper was enjoyed, and it appeared that all members present managed to find plenty to chat about.

The Solent Area met at the Emsworth Slipper Club on Friday, 22nd November. The area officers and committee were re-elected en bloc, and the area Secretary's report was read and adopted. The financial statement showed a healthy state of affairs. The most important announcement made was that having completely outgrown the facilities at the R.A.F. Yacht Club at Hamble, and following tide troubles in starting the race at the Coronation Buoy, next year will see a migration to Cowes, where the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club has very kindly offered to entertain us for the day, which will be Saturday 6th September. It is with a very real sense of regret that we shall be leaving the R.A.F.Y.C., who have been our hosts ever since the first Old Gaffers Race.

Possibilities of a Rally at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club on Beaulieu River in August were mentioned, and also a rally at Le Havre at Whitsun, which it is hoped some East Coast based members will be able to attend. A rally at the Hardway Sailing Club in June was also discussed. There was also discussion on a possible trophy for the best log of a cruise.

The evening continued with a buffet supper arranged by the area Chairman Fred Hillier, and general discussion round the bar.

NAVIGATION The Cruising Association is organising a special showing at the London Planetarium of their programme on Astral Navigation on Tuesday, 11th February at 6.30 p.m., at a cost of 7s. 6d. per head. Tickets can be obtained from the Secretary, The Cruising Association, Chiltern Court, Baker Street, London, W.1. If not a member of the Cruising Association, please mention that you are a member of the O.G.A. when applying for tickets. The Cruising Association bar will be open after the show, and Old Gaffers will be welcome; snacks will be available.

AN OLD GAFFER IN THE COLOMBINO RACE

A breeze tempered the hot sunshine, which made bearable our work of hauling the engine on deck. It took all three of us, Nikki, Paul and I, to manage the operation. It was only a routine measure, we had been a year away from England on our 30 ft. Gaff Cutter "Sugar Creek", and although we rarely use our "iron topsail", Las Palmas de Gran Canaria seemed a sensible place to give it a good check over in preparation for our imminent Atlantic crossing.

When we had it sitting firmly in the cockpit, bits and pieces distributed all around, Hugh and Anne, a couple who have retired to Las Palmas, drew alongside for a chat. They told us that in a week's time there was to be a race to San Sebastian de Gomera. Gomera, a small Island lying 100 miles west of Gran Canaria, was the departure point for Christopher Columbus when he sailed to the West Indies, and this race was to commemorate his departure.

Quick calculations followed and we decided we could be ready just in time. Hugh and Anne agreed to come with us as extra hands.

It was a tremendous rush, but by the day of the race the engine was repainted and back in place - we were ready. In addition to Hugh and Anne we had acquired a further crew member - Angela who, like us, was in her twenties and just seeing a bit of the world.

There were seven boats in the race altogether, and we were the only "old gaffer". There was one other long distance cruising boat with us - "Four Seasons" - a 27 foot Trintle sloop flying the Swiss flag. Most of the other boats were long sleek out-and-out racers between 30 and 40 feet in length belonging to the local yacht clubs. The two exceptions were a 30 foot Nimble Trimaran and a tiny Cinder fiberglass sloop.

The start was at 1100 hours and by 1000 hours we were sailing around proudly flying our colours - the Jolly Roger - the same one that Tommy Bolton used to fly from Maria. It had brought us good luck in the 1967 Old Gaffers race, why should it not do so now a year later in the Colombino race? This train of thought was sadly shattered three minutes before the start when our genoa sheets broke loose from the sail and by the time we crossed the starting line all the others were passing the harbour wall several hundred yards ahead.

The first four miles turned out to be a beat into a force three wind accompanied by a nasty swell. These were not good conditions for us, and this, taken with an unfavourable wind change, put us more than two miles behind the next boat as we freed sheets to come round the head of the island. The wind remained light for the rest of the afternoon and although it was now right behind us we seemed to remain just as far behind. This was not for lack of trying for we had hoisted our large squaresail and set a raffee above it in addition to keeping up main and topsail.

As the sun fell low on the horizon the wind freshened to force 4 - 5 and we began to pick up speed, it was not long before we had passed the little Cinder and were close behind the Swiss Trintle. The wind increased to force 6 and for the half hour we kept up full sail our recorded speed was 9 knots, faster than we have ever sailed before. At this point we overtook the Swiss boat whose crew later confided that he thought we were going to take off. We would have liked to keep up full sail in this wind and flown all night at 9 knots racing the sheets of wpray which flew from the top of every wave, but we have a long way to go so it was only seamanlike to reduce sail. We struck topsail and raffee and our speed decreased to 8 knots, still one of the best speeds we have ever made.

Unfortunately it only lasted till the early hours when we ran into the lee of Tenerife and lay wallowing for eight hours in the calm. We amused ourselves during this period chatting to a huge navy tug which acted as rescue boat, via a tiny walkie-talkie Hugh had brought along. Nearly every competitor has one of these and keeps in touch with the tug on and off throughout the race.

At daylight we were still becalmed but at least we could see we were very well in front of the Cinder and the Trintle as well as "Gran Canaria" one of the club racing boats. Eventually a light headwind pushed us slowly forward. At this point the other boats moved up on us - unhampered by the weight of stores and equipment we carry. It was frustrating to see them slowly slip ahead. The tug came up behind and we talked to the captain, complaining of the lack of wind. "All right" he said, "we will send you a breeze". We thanked him, not knowing as he did that just out of the shelter of Tenerife we should be meeting a force 7 wind hard on our starboard bow. By the time we got this the Cinder and Gran Canaria were well away, though the Trintle sloop was still behind us, much further upwind.

As the wind hit we took down the topsail and changed the genoa for jib and staysail - we still raced along with the lee deck continually awash. The nearer we got to port the more apparent it was that there was going to be a real fight for

sixth place between us and the Trintle. He was making great speed on a close reach still hanging on to his genoa.

Just before the port entrance the sea flattened and the wind dropped as a whole, but it was accompanied by shrieking gusts of force 8. Each time one hit us, Sugar Creek was pushed hard over until, perhaps for the first time in her 34 years, the cabin top was under water. We luffed to the gusts and it was this that ensured we could make the harbour entrance without having to tack, enabling us to cross the finishing line just ahead of our Swiss friends.

The race had been won four hours before by one of the club racing boats; another came second; the trimaran third; Gran Canaria fourth; the tiny Cinder fifth, leaving sixth and seventh place for us and the Trintle. However, if we two cruising boats were not the fastest, we were the most comfortable by far. We learnt we were the only crews who had cooked on the trip and had some decent rest. The others all survived on cold food, having been thoroughly soaked throughout the race.

No sooner had we tied up than we were boarded by the port captain and the president of the club. We invited them on board for a drink. The port captain sadly declined saying it was not allowed on duty, but we pointed to our Jolly Roger and explained we were a pirate ship - that made it all permitted. That was the start for us of the celebrations laid on for all the racing boats by the local inhabitants. We were taken all over the island in cars, we ate meal upon meal given in our honour and those who still had any energy left danced all night in the local casino.

Today all the other boats have left and Hugh and Anne departed on the local steamer leaving us all alone in the peaceful harbour of San Sebastian. We have found it so pleasant here we are going to stay for several days before we make our way south to the Cape Verde islands. Anyone coming this way who prefers small quiet towns to large industrial ones would do well to follow Christopher Columbus's example and call in Gomera to take on stores and water - his welcome is assured.

Chris Doyle.

QUIVERING ROUND THE BRAMBLES

After attending the Cruising Association Meet at the Folly Inn on the Bank Holiday weekend, Quiver's machinery had something of a hangover, with no urge on one lung. It was therefore expedient to leave her at Hamble after that weekend, and not have to rely on getting there from Chichester in time for the Solent Race. Also, as our Committee Boat, Concara, lives in Birdham Pool, I was able to crew her round to the Hamble on the Friday, and thus ensure that we had, in fact, got a Committee Boat.

The light Easterly wind which greeted us early on Saturday morning (7th September) showed no sign of freshening or veering and it was an easy assumption that the Race Officer, Des. Robinson, would send us round Course A (twice round the Brambles) but that it would be shortened to a single round.

Having a certain amount of paperwork still to hand over to the Race Committee, I moored Quiver alongside Concara after she had taken up her station, until after 10 o'clock, when at the insistence of my crew, I re-boarded her and got under way. The increasing flood tide immediately took us smartly up Southampton Water, and the tactics for the start became apparent. In the very light airs, the only way to beat the tide was to creep inshore in the shallow water; but the Committee Boat was well offshore; one would get up tide of the line, tack out to the Committee Boat, harden in to cross the line, only to find that one was still the wrong side of it by the time one was being swept outside the limit mark, Coronation Buoy. After two such

false attempts, I took Quiver a cable further up the Hill Head shore before tacking out, and came roaring down on Concara with the sheets well eased; the extra way thus gained just enabled us to get over the line as we scraped round Concara's stern, then nip back into the shallow water for the long beat up to Lee. We were about sixth to cross the line, and twenty minutes after the gun at that!

The first mark was East Bramble, but as the tide was by now increasingly West-going, it was essential to keep well into the North shore shallow water to beat it. Amongst those ahead of us, we could see our invariable rivals Betty, Saga, Trammel, as well as some we could not recognise. We found ourselves crossing tacks with Sea Breeze, once a bit naughtily, but Mr. Wood gave us the benefit. An hour after crossing the line, we were only up to Meonmarsh, and a second hour took us only to the hovercraft slip at Lee. By this time the leading boats had fetched out and some had rounded East Bramble, though we could see that one or two had missed and were having to make another tack inshore. At this point, my patience got the better of my judgement; I had a perfectly good navigator who told me I ought to get at least another half mile up the coast before going out into the tide. I had seen Betty and Co. rounding the mark comfortably from where I then was, so out I went despite the advice. Of course, by the time we got out there, the tide had increased, and we duly missed by about a cable; after a couple of abortive attempts to beat up tide in the deep water, I had to give it best, and creep all the way back to Lee to gain the other quarter mile. All this took an hour, and effectively put us out of the prize list. While thus journeying around the Solent, we came across Saga, apparently looking for the Isle of Wight; I had thought her to have rounded the mark, and be miles ahead, but it seems that one of Mr. Thoresen's car ferries had foiled her, and made her join us other searchers. How she managed to make up so much lost ground subsequently is still a mystery to me.

The rest of the course was easy, if slow, going. Once round East Bramble, South Bramble was an easy fetch, then sheets were eased right off for a spinnaker run to Spanker. I chose to keep to the South of two vast tankers anchored in the roads, on the theory that we might get blanketed by them on the direct course; in fact, I think that the longer route was exactly compensated by stronger tide, and no-one who went direct had any trouble from blanketing. Spanker to Deck was a comfortable reach with little tide trouble; but from Deck to the finish was a long drawn out run against another foul tide, not helped this time by several fleets of dinghies racing off Hill Head.

I learned two important lessons. First, if you are lucky enough to have a reliable navigator on board - take his advice! Second (in my capacity as Hon. Secretary) Old Gaffers can NOT race in light airs and Spring tides. I am therefore making certain that next year we shall have a neap tide Saturday for the Solent Old Gaffers Race.

Michael Millar.

ADVERTISEMENTS

FOR SALE CLLIYD - Royal Mersea Yacht Club Rivers Class gaff cutter. 23' x 7' 3" x 3' 6". Pitch pine on grown oak. Has had a cabin, but now converted back to original three quarter deck layout. Excellent day-boat, could sleep two under fore-deck if required,

7 h.p. Kelvin petrol/paraffin, electric start, wing mounted; Henderson bilge pump, flares, etc., mainsail (Taylor) new last year, new staysail and topsail by Hutton of Hull, Plywood dinghy. £350, inc. delivery by road. P. Austin, 12 Hull Road, Cottingham, E. Yorks.

6.

WANTED Couple (30's) required to assist in sailing and maintenance of 20 tonner, "Cutlass" based on the Medway. No capital required at all. Owner will supply gunter rigged National 16' for casual sailing, complete gear and mooring quite free. In return for keeping Cutlass aired and clean whilst owner is unable to get afloat, which unfortunately is becoming more and more frequent due to extreme pressure of business. Own transport is essential, also a small outboard motor could be a boon - it is quite a pull from the landing to the mooring. Experience is not essential but enthusiasm is. Annual holiday, when and where time and circumstances permit, Channel Islands, Continent, or perhaps one or more of the Northern countries should time permit.

A. Hall, 2 Billet Cottages, Ash, Nr. Sevenoaks, Kent.

FOR SALE Two staysails: luff 17', Foot 11', Leech 15' 6", diagonal 9'. One tanned flax, needs new luff wire, one heavy canvas, good condition.

One light reaching staysail: dirty white. Luff 20' 6", Foot 17', Leech 19' 6", diagonal 16'.

One light jib: dirty white. Luff 30', Leech 21' 6", Foot 13', diagonal 7'.

Two Mainsails: Head 10', Luff 16' 6", Foot 15' 6". One tanned heavy flax, restitched. One light cotton - repaired but dirty.

One boom and fittings: 17' x 4½".

One clean spar: 16' x 5".

One Wykeham-Martin furling gear No. 2.

Various blocks and odds and ends.

Offers to: P.W. Clements, 20 Harbour View Road, Poole, Dorset.

Tel: Parkstone 5437.

TRAMMEL 21' 6" Gaff Cutter. Built 1949 on lines of Itchen Ferry type. New Terylene Mainsail, Topsail and Staysail. Cotton jib. All gear in excellent order. 8 h.p. Stuart Turner engine. Blake W.C. Sleep four. Has consistently been among the leaders in Gaffers races. Won Channel Plate 1967. Owner must sell to "raise the wind" for a business venture. Mooring available at Hamble if required. £975.

W. Tucker, Tower Cottage, Green Lane, Bursledon, Hants.

Tel: Bursledon 2310.

AUXILIARY GAFF CUTTER. 8 tons (T.M.) 28' L.O.A., 9' beam, 5' draught. Built Luke Bros, Hamble, 1933. Pitch pine on oak frames and rock elm timbers. Laid deck with teak covering board, painted. Lead keel (about 2 tons). Teak cabin top and trim. Two berths in saloon, two cots in fore-castle. Separate W.C. (Blake) and wash basin. Calor gas cooker and stainless sink.

12/15 b.h.p. Petter air cooled diesel engine, new 1958, overhauled 1967, little used.

Terylene sails: main, foresail, jib and storm jib.

Terylene sheets and running rigging. Galvanised S.W.R. standing rigging.

Solid varnished pine mast and spars.

Fairway echo sounder, B.E.M.E. Miniloop D/F radio.

Melaware crockery, cutlery, pans, etc. Dunlopillo, vinyl covered, bunk cushions. Foam cot mattresses. Well found and in good condition. At present laid up and lying at Bembridge, I.O.W.

£1,500.

Apply: J. de V.G. Wallis, Wistaria House, High Street, Bembridge, I.O.W.

WANTED! MORE NEWSLETTER ARTICLES! URGENT.

Compliments of the Season and good wishes to all members. J.A.S.

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