

Small Boats Report for ACM 2026

The 2025 Sailing Season

I think most people will look back on the 2025 sailing season with some satisfaction and, for the most part at least, we can't blame the weather for any shortcomings it may have had. I think that most of the now "traditional" OGA Small Boat events took place in 2025. Small boats activities on the East Coast seem to go from strength to strength and the format of the well-established Swallows and Amazons event was tweaked slightly last year to include an extra day's sailing. The North West Area has also had many good small boat events and, for those who attended, I am sure the fantastic Ullswater Rally and Gaffling Championships held over the August Bank Holiday weekend, will be long remembered. In the South West, a new event was held at Mylor. This is a great location for small boat sailing and, despite my comments above, the weather for this one was truly awful and unfortunately very little sailing took place. Nevertheless, I think the attendees, some of whom had travelled long distances, all had a good time and the event will be repeated in 2026.

It was a good year for overseas travel with small boats, too, and I know that our members were well-represented in events at St. Malo, Morbihan and in the Netherlands.

Gaffling 4.1

We conducted a formal review of the Gaffling project at the 2025 ACM. As a result, we decide to relaunch the class for the next phase of its development with Pete Elliston as its "Champion". I know Pete has been working hard to resolve some of the open issues with the class and to update the documentation that surrounds it. Pete will be presenting his own report on the Gaffling.

Communications.

We have, again, had OGA Small Boats articles in most editions of Watercraft magazine. I think these represent an important external window onto our activities and I would like to thank everyone who has provided the content for them. For some reason that I cannot explain, Small Boats temporarily "slipped off the radar" in the Gaffers Log but I am pleased to report that it has now been reinstated. I know that the editor, Jay, is very keen to give the littluns the space they deserve.

The OGA Small Boats WhatsApp group has been used fairly sparingly during 2025 and it would probably benefit from a relaunch for the 2026 season.

Looking Forward to 2026.

I can see that the OGA calendar for 2026 is already taking shape and it looks as though, once more, there will be a good variety of events for small boats. The Gaffling Championship in 2026 is scheduled for 28th -31st August at Derwent Reservoir in the North East. I would encourage the Areas to get their final programmes published as soon as possible, if they haven't already done so, to give everyone the chance to plan their sailing season.

I have often pondered on exactly what makes a good small boat programme within which there are events that people will be prepared to travel to. It is obviously much to do with what happens on the water but what happens landside is crucial, too. Many (most?) of the people who tow boats to small boat events want to use a campervan or a tent to stay in so I would encourage event organisers to take this fully into account as part of their planning. I have never been sure whether we should be striving for as many small boat events as possible in the calendar, with the inevitable conflicts this would cause, or for fewer, bigger and better events. What do the Areas think?

Organisation.

Almost 40% of OGA members have expressed a desire to be included as part of the small boat community, so it remains a very important sub set of the overall membership and one that, I am sure, still merits its own focus within the association. I said at last year's meeting that I intended to stand down as Small Boat Secretary in January 2026. That is still the case, and I am pleased to be able to tell you that Mike Dixon has agreed to take on the role. For those of you who don't know Mike, I can tell you that he has a long and impressive "Sailing CV" that involves boats of all shapes and sizes and that he currently sails a Smack's Boat. I am sure you will give him your support when he picks up the reins.

David Bewick.

OGA Small Boat Secretary.