

Gaffling 4.1 Report for 2025 season. ACM

The First of the big developments:

The year began really, with the notification that the NE area had been deliberating hard on how best to manage their slow decline in membership numbers. Francis Mogg and his small team enlisted the help and advice from OGA President Mike Beckett. Out of their meetings, came the amalgamation of the NE area with the EC as mentioned in the EC Area report.

So why is it also noted here? Well, that is because the NE have two Gafflings, Number 5 which is *Tunstall Tide* and number 6 *TBC* and these will now fall under the ownership and custodianship of the EC Area.

That brings, bizarrely, 5 out of 6 Gafflings into the EC Area 'fold'. Fortunately for us, currently, *Tunstall Tide* will remain in the NE at the School where she was built, on a loan arrangement as in the past with the OGA insuring her.

The 6th one is of unknown condition, but Francis and I are in touch with Martin Haigh to establish extent of condition so we can work out the next step with it.

Currently the OGA have the 6 Gafflings that went to the 'Great Ullswater Event' which was put on so superbly by the NW area team!

From the NW 'Gaffling team': A quote from Alasdair Simpson.

"Jabberwocky, Arnside Sailing Club's Gaffling was regularly used by club members during the season as well attending the Ullswater Rally. The Club have used the boat to take out new members sailing. A modification at the start of the season was to add floor bungs so water can drain out of the cockpit.

Arnside Sailing Club have received a grant from the Council to install a small heritage display in their foyer. This will include a panel on the build

of the Gaffling. As well as sailing, the Club plan to promote its use by members for rowing in 2026”

The EC Gaffling season:

- This started with a Gaffling ‘going foreign’, the first Gaffling to do so - *Linling* was fitted to a framework over the top of the internationally famous *Dirty Girty* as part of the ‘EC Tour of Four to St Malo’!



This photo was taken as we were looking for a place to launch, the 400 T travel-hoist was thought to be a bit excessive, so we found a slipway! (by PTK)

- *Linling* was used in the St Malo Wet dock by Mike and Dee Beckett, Jo and Georgina Tall then Simon Harding who sailed her out that windy race day and round to the marina for the haul out.
- Then back to home waters for local racing and cruising at the 28-boat turnout Swallows and Amazons event at Walton where *Essling* & *Linling* did what they could to show off their versatility at racing and cruising. *Linling* came 2nd on Handicap and 1st in class with *Essling* cruising on the Sunday with two dogs on board making up 6 pairs of legs on board. Another probable Gaffling ‘first’!!
- More local cruising for 10 days and for a second time *Essling* was towed behind our 22 ft Gaff cutter *Reverie* and once again served well

as a tender under oar, scull and motor. Again, for a second year *Reverie* finished 2nd overall in the week's points series proving the towability of a 14 ft Gaffling. *Essling* was also cruised by Younger Gaffer Graham Adie down the rivers Alde and Ore as a 'delivery' to the next venue in the cruise. That completed her cruise of almost the length of the two rivers from Orford to Snape.

- Next was the 'Great Ullswater Event' which we have all read about so only really need to comment on the way that 4 Gafflings got there from the EC. A double stacking trailer took one pair – a temporary conversion of my Drascombe Coaster *Morag's* trailer took the second pair. The photos show us on the way up. Again, versatile little boats!
- At this event there was considerable cruising by the 3 generations of the Phillips Family who all enjoyed a day on the water cruising the whole of it from the Club and back with Elliot, 12, and his younger sister Nancy, 5, doing most of the helming in the *Shrimp* which was again loaned to us by Ian Young.



Suffling over the Shrimp on the converted Drascombe Coaster trailer by PTK and Nick P drawbar ballast is a sand yacht! (by PTK)



*Linling over Essling on West Mersea designed and built double stacking trailer owned by PTK
towed by Yvonne Mitchell (by PTK)*

- The next Gaffling 'turnout' was the Norfolk rally in September where we had *Essling* & *Linling* once again 'on a double stacker' This time a brand new member Sam Francis hired *Essling* (and has promised a write up of how to do this) for the weekend cruising on the river Thurne in Norfolk based at a campsite with a slipway.
- Again, at this rally the 'Phillips Family' turned out to sail a Gaffling, *Linling* this time, in company with all types of EC trailer boats.

What is going on in the background?

- The **Build Book** is nearly ready to go to Fyne kits, just needs some minor mods to be done to the notes section by Andrew W to bring all the sensible mods required for the existing boats into the new version. Once complete, all future boats will be the same, improved versions!

- In fact, these mods are now being done on the current hulls by various people having heard ‘in the boatyard’ what needs to be done.
- **Hull Numbering** has now been settled on from discussions and searching back through minutes and emails to and from various stakeholders and is now as this shows:

Hull Numbering @2025

Build order	Hull Number	Sail Number	Builder	Owners/Location	Boat Name	OGA insured
1		1963	Tony Kiddle	Pete Elliston/Mistley	Linling	
2		1964	M Haigh	(Gil Hayward) Ian Young/Suffolk	Shrimp	
3		3	P Thomas	OGA EC Area/Suffolk	Suffling	Yes
4	6	4	P Elliston	OGA EC Area/Essex	Essling	Yes
5		1965	M Haigh	OGA/Tunstall Community College	Tunstall Tide	Yes
6		6	M Haigh	TBC	Tba	
7		7	Arnside SC	Arnside SC/Lakes	Jabberwocky	

- As can be seen, *Essling* needs to have her hull number changed as she was numbered before order of build was determined. Unfortunately for me the wooden plate is routed and bonded into the main thwart! Andrew and I have agreed that the hulls should have the hull number carved into the inner transom rather than a plate which is too easily removed and is a nuisance when maintaining.
- Interested members have been asked to form up the working group. This just remains to be set up formally before meeting to move things forwards. Pete T, Alasdair S, Andrew W, Mike D, and me.

Modifications:

- **Basic ones:** Self bailers, transom limber holes, and changes to running rigging.

- **Forward looking/pointy one:** Carbo spar and asymmetric spinnaker for *Linling* - after all the Gaffling has been designed for this in the hope it will appeal to youngsters. I have discussed this too with Andrew in the summer last year and, as it is under my ownership, it seems a good idea, particularly now having read all about Sam Doman's open boat designs and "Round Britain Challenge". [Sam's website](#)

Insurance:

- *Tunstall Tide*, *Essling* & *Suffling* are insured under the OGA policy for UK waters only.
- *Shrimp* & *Linling* are insured privately and loaned to the OGA with the latter being covered for continental waters, hence going "Foreign" to St Malo.

Maintenance:

- This is a subject that is slowly drifting down on the tide towards us all. Some maintenance is already being carried out by individuals but as time and tide pass by with more frequent usage and road haulage, we will be faced with that scourge of all sailors -- Repairs and Maintenance!
- Clearly now the boats are a part of the OGA with the change from 3 boats at the first Gaffling Championship to the Ullswater event with all 6. Doubled in one year, ok it will be impossible to double again but we do need to recognise the costs and put funding aside.
- Technically I think the OGA own 3 boats as they are the 3 insured and are on the books. *Tunstall Tide* is loaned to the school as I have stated in the summary and insured by the OGA. This arrangement needs to be looked at, and I suggest that the school formally take the use/loan of the boat on "a full repairing lease". They built it so somewhere there are skills. If not, then we will end up not knowing its condition nor how to carry out repairs and will have to cost it into the budget yet to be set up.
- *Essling* & *Suffling* need some maintenance for the coming season separate to the modifications. The latter has been through Pete Thomas's shop already and looks like new, mods are underway. *Essling* needs the same.

- *Linling* Although being owned by me, has been used wholly for the OGA's benefit as the earlier part of this report shows. Originally, back in November 2024 when at our EC AGM, we suggested that, as we had two boats, we should consider a third in the area to be able to "make a race". Having made that public statement, I bought Tony's boat *Clachnacudney* to ensure that we had in in the area and it has been part of the OGA fleet since. This one too needs maintenance, mods and thinking about.
- *Shrimp* Just before the last AGM I received an email offer from the owner Ian Young in which he has stated that the boat will be donated to the EC/OGA if we are interested! Since this became known on the EC we then had the 3rd, albeit in the future but as Ian himself says, he may be getting too old for dinghy sailing at 85.
- **Bosun:** Over a year ago we realised that we would need a Bosun to co-ordinate maintenance activities, and soon we had a volunteer after a bit of selective canvassing. That meant we should try to get the boats in one place. Two was not going to be a problem but three and with the NE merging with us, four? Then there was always *Linling*. By her arrival time we had been in discussions with a couple of local sailing clubs about forming a relationship with them.

Base for EC Gafflings

- One local club wanted our OGA members to formally join as affiliate members to use the club with storage etc to be added on. The membership was around £300 per person so it was a non-starter.
- The Walton and Frinton Yacht Club, where we have based our Swallows and Amazons event for the past 25 years, was the obvious choice and we started talking about the idea at last year's event.
- We learned that the local boatyard Bedwells was going to change hands in September 2025, so we hoped for the opportunity to engage with them.
- I had an email from them in October in which they were offering some sponsorship for the 2026 S&A event. That sounded hopeful, but they

have been frantic getting the yard sorted out - I waited for an opportunity to meet up with them.

- I will be able to report on that soon.

So, in summary:

- A good Gaffling sailing season with plenty of variety of cruising, racing and towing on the water and road both at home and abroad.
- The Gaffling proves itself in all aspects of boating including motoring and *Essling* is probably the only one to have been used in every single one of those aspects.
- Plenty has been going on in the background, the benefits as always, slow to be realised.
- At the Ullswater weekend we had some great shots of the line up of Gafflings which resulted from admiring *Linling* on the grass as we were doubling up on launching trolleys! They were all dry sailed as a result with a lift-and-launch crew but this has given us some excellent publicity material. Thanks to Steve Daley for photos and Ollie Phillips for the drone shots.
- The boats clearly now have a place in the rankings of the OGA we just need to maintain the impetus started. Which leads neatly onto...

THE CHALLENGE AND THE LONG VIEW:

- The 2026 "Small Boat Event at Derwent Reservoir, incorporating the 3rd Gaffling Championship" is going to be great showcase for the class and the classy open boats attending too. For greater recognition of these points we need to:
 1. Formally promote this event as this title suggests, which will encourage other small boat OGA members to attend.
 2. "Formalise (in the minds of the OGA) the date of the August Bank Holiday weekend as the 'permanent date for a joint event" (a quote from a recent email to me from Mike Dixon)

3. Work out how to “get more younger gaffers involved” (again MD)
 4. If 3 works, then maybe we should consider a separate race for under 16s maybe?
- Early discussions are taking place on the EC regarding tying in with an RYA training yacht club who use Optimists as their starter boats and only last night (Sat 24th) I was talking at another very local sailing club about getting a fleet of open Gaffer dinghies and Gafflings to their regatta as they created a special class for us years ago. “My Blue Pass” cadets who train from the club will probably be available as crew members. The group lead was very interested our discussions. “We have the boats and you have the crews” was my statement there.....

So, let's get some more boats built, and get those boats we have
OUT THERE!

Pete Elliston
EC Secretary/Vice President
For the ACM 2026
Harwich