
Old Gaffers Association

North West Area - Annual Report 2019

2 January 2020



SUMMARY

The year commenced with OGA members in attendance at the first Crossfields Conference which was organised by NW member Alasdair Simpson to celebrate the remarkable maritime heritage of Arnside.

Although focussed on Morecambe Bay Prawners and their derivatives, which are mostly gaff rigged fishing boats, the 70 delegates were made up of many OGA and NOA members from the various areas who own, crew and enjoy these historic gaff rigged craft.

Some five speakers made presentations starting with the history of the Crossfield boats and later restorations including from three owners still sailing these classic craft. Sabina Tassinari 'Moya' (1910) in the Adriatic at Trieste, Mike Beckett owner of 'Bonita' (1988) kept in the Swale and Keith Watson owner of 'Maryll' (1937) who keeps her in Holland.

An exhibition of photographs and the presence of members of the Crossfields family some of whom had travelled from their home in Canada made for a remarkable conference.

The weekend of 31 May - 2 June and members with their boats attended the International Mersey River Festival. Some eight boats in attendance making some new friends as we opened up our boats for the visiting public.

Following on from the week-end a Summer Cruise (planned in two parts) set-off for Scotland via the IOM and Northern Ireland on the easterly seaboard, visiting the harbours of Port St. Mary (IOM), Peel (IOM).

Then an early morning start to Carrickfergus (NI) before the next day, passing the most dramatic cliff walk in Europe, The Gobbins, host to one of the most geologically diverse landscapes on earth. Puffins, Guillemots and Razorbills crowd the cliffs during breeding season. The Kittiwakes too are a striking sight and Cormorants lining the cliff as they dive deep for fish. To sail past the foot of the cliffs was an experience not to be missed.

Passing the Maidens to starboard en-route to the little harbour of Glenarm we were welcomed in the local hostelry to some Guinness refreshment and a carry out delivered to our table with full cutlery provided by the pub.

The following day we set-off crossing the North Channel passing close by Sanda Island, to port. Ailsa Craig, rising over 1,000 ft in the middle of the Clyde, far away to starboard which dominates the view on most days. Our arrival in Campbeltown provided suitable refreshment, refuel and a pleasant visit to one of the local Distilleries 'Springbank'.

Our next departure took us along the coast of Arran before setting a course for Largs. Next day we headed up the Clyde passing Cloch Point Lighthouse before heading east to Dumbarton Castle. Our berth for the next couple of weeks was to be at Sandpoint Marina on the River Leven, famous for the building of the fastest tea clipper in the world, the 'Cutty Sark'. We returned back, via Glasgow, to the Northwest for pressing business matters.

On returning to the fast flowing River Leven all was found to be good and after saying our farewells sailed down the Clyde towards the Isle of Bute, berthing overnight in Port Bannatyne. The following morning we entered East Kyle to sail the Kyles of Bute which is without any doubt one of the most scenic passages in the world. After leaving the Kyles we ventured into Loch Fyne to enjoy the facilities at Portavardie, an exceptional marina.

A motor sail, as the Clyde was as flat as a pancake to Troon saw us enjoy one of the best meals of the trip. With good company, some cocktails, good wine and a huge seafood platter satisfied everyone in the group. The following morning we set-off on our return journey planned with an overnight at Girvan.

Morning dawned, breakfast consumed and time to start the engines to leave port. Alas the boat 'Phyllis' would not engage gear and after a quick diagnose the gearbox was suspected. With no technical support available as the Scottish Wake Weeks had just started and as time and tide waits for no one the boat was abandoned. The crew joining the Nobby 'Spray' for return back to homeports.

Long passages saw us back within a couple of days via an overnight in Peel (IOM). 'Phyllis' was later sorted and is currently in Largs Marina for the winter months.

Regretfully with various boat breakdowns, subsequent repairs and an unkindly series of health issues with crew resulted in the remaining season being effectively lost. Several events at Conwy, the Menai Straits and sadly the IOM Traditional Boat Festival were all missed.

Everything and everybody are now sorted and we are all looking forward to some successful sailing in this coming New Year.

*Kevin Goulding -
President North West Region*