

South West Gaffers

Promoting Gaff Rig in Devon and
Cornwall

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The Dog Watch

For the Sea Dogs of Devon and Cornwall

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Welcome

Whilst the weather did a pretty good job of trying to thwart our sailing this season we have had some very enjoyable sailing events. There is little doubt that the highlight for many was the Sou' by Sou' West Cruise which proved a most convivial experience. Meeting folk from distant parts is always interesting and the banter was good with many a fascinating yarn told. All involved appear to have thoroughly enjoyed it and there has been a hankering to do it again—in decent weather.

The OGA 55 celebrations near Cowes on the River Medina next year give an opportunity for similar fun and games. Hopefully, a goodly fleet of South West Gaffers will go along to join the festivities and meet up again with some of those intrepid sailors. But if you are thinking of going please look on the website and let the organisers know to help with the planning. And do look at page 17 of this issue to read about an alternative way of going there.

Changing the subject to the rather problematic Start Bay Rally and Race we have decided that it can no longer continue as it is. It has been decided to move the event to Plymouth to attract more boats and synchronise a trailer sailer event with it. We also plan to beef up the social side of it. You will see from the outline programme for next year on page 16 that we have booked this event at Plymouth Yachthaven.

Plymouth Classics will have to run this year if it is not to disappear altogether and negotiations are earnestly in progress to re-launch it as a larger maritime festival event. We can only hope that "Britain's Ocean City" will be able to support it and some commercial sponsorship may at last be forthcoming.

Falmouth Classics continues to go from strength to strength and Don has asked that you take note that entries for 2018 are already being accepted on the newly updated website. It's a must !

We have had some changes which you can read about in the summary of the AGM on the following page. We are delighted to have some new blood joining your organising group in the person of David Patuck. But two fine characters Pat Cassidy and Alan Miller –Williams have resigned after many years service. We wish them well.

And from us all we wish you a very pleasant Christmas and a fabulous sailing season next year. Well that's a wish!

The Next Event

Wed 17th January 7 for 7.30

Informal Get Together

The China House, Plymouth

Laying Up Lunch and AGM

David Bewick

SW Gaffers' Laying-up lunch and AGM was held at the Royal Western Yacht Club in Plymouth on 11th November. A group of 35 members and their guests met for lunch and enjoyed seeing some old friends and acquaintances and one or two new faces as well.

After lunch, the "serious" business of the AGM took place. The Secretary reflected on another busy year for SW Gaffers. We had run another complete programme of events this year. The highlight for many had been the highly successful Sou' by Sou'West cruise initiated by Ben Collins of Solent Gaffers that passed through several ports in our Area during the summer.

The Treasurer reported that our finances were in good shape. This year, there were several changes to the Area Committee. Peter Crook had decided to stand down as President but to stand for re-election for the committee. Alan Miller-Williams and Pat Cassidy had both decided to step down from the committee. Paul Jolley had been nominated to stand as President and was duly elected, as were the remainder of the old committee: i.e. Peter Crook, Elspeth Macfarlane, David Bewick, Gil Hayward and John Gallagher. David Patuck was elected onto the committee for the first time. The new President, Paul Jolley, thanked Peter, Alan and Pat for their service to SW Gaffers and awarded them small gifts as tokens of our appreciation for all their good work.

One of the "hot-topics" in OGA circles this year has been to do with the possible change of name of the organisation. The Northern Ireland Area had made the case that the "Old" in OGA was a barrier to the recruitment of younger members and that a name like the Gaff Rig Sailing Association might serve us better. There are pros and cons to the suggested name change but, on balance, those at the AGM were agreed that we should **not** change the name. The "Old" in OGA has never been a major issue in our Area as everything we do has been, and will continue to be, done as SW Gaffers.

We also had a good discussion about the OGA Youth Fund. This was established to help fund activities to attract new younger members but it has never had quite the impact that had been hoped for. Whilst we support the objective of the fund in general terms, there is some scepticism about whether we are likely to gain many new young members from it. The feeling of many members is that younger sailors are more likely to be attracted to modern high-performance

boats than gaffers, even though they might migrate to more traditional ones later in life. The issues of MCA coding and DBS (formerly CRB) checks are also seen by many as a barrier to sailing with children. We do know, however, that events such as the Dittisham small boat rally are attractive to families and perhaps they give us the best opportunities for engaging with the next generation of gaffers. We should not forget, either, that we do have a history of doing things with young people *via* established youth groups and we will continue to do this. One suggestion was that the OGA should consider having a crew-matching facility on its website for both young and older prospective crew members, alike.

We are looking forward to a full programme of events both on and off the water in 2018.



Paul Jolley our new president presenting Peter Crook the retiring president who will stay on the committee.



Alan Miller - Williams retiring after many years of service to SW Gaffers at the fine age of 90 and a bit.



Pat Cassidy also retired as our long standing Regalia Officer.

Photos: by John Gallagher

Susan J was one of the only four boats to make the Scillies on the Sou' by Sou' West Cruise and his journey was published in the last Dogwatch. Here you can read how David started out his days with his new boat.

Some Inexperiences of an Aspiring Gaffer

David Patuck

Land based most of my life, I learnt to sail during fortnight holidays in Gillan Creek, in clinker built dinghies, one gunter and the other Bermudan rigged. Then, while at school and university, Fireflies, Enterprises and the occasional Wayfarer. Later, with family, we pottered when we could, in our Mirror dinghy *Tinker*, and these days, in *Flat Sea*, our lug rigged Anarth rowing boat on the Helford River. For the last five years we had also owned a modern 20 foot Jeanneau Sun 2000. Now retired, I have also been privileged to crew for Mike and Deirdre on *Bonita* from the Swale, with several crossings of the N. Sea, the English Channel and the Falmouth to Waterford leg of the OGA 50 Round Britain. All this had enthused us to become "Old Gaffers" but nothing could fully prepare us for ownership.

We spent the last two years looking for a suitable sea kindly, comfortable coastal cruising boat. We have enjoyed meeting several SW gaffers at Plymouth and Falmouth winter social gatherings and helping Don and Pauline at the Helford Rally. It was becoming clear, as well as after many discussions and aboard *Bonita*, that a gaff rigged work boat could provide a comfortable spacious hull of modest length but a sail plan more suited to a longer hull to provide some meaningful passage making. We looked at several rather tired working boats and realised we might need to adjust our budget.

Then we saw that *Susan J* was for sale. She looked just the part. We were already aware of some of her provenance and Mike and Dan Shaw very kindly offered us a sail back to Poole from Cowes at the end of last year's gaffers rally (August 2016). Clearly, *Susan J* could cope with waves and wind better than myself. Everything seemed to work, although the hot pizzas prepared aboard were appreciated more by the fish in my case. We were both smitten and we agreed that we would have another look once she was lifted out in November. It became clear that Mike and Dan, while wanting something larger, were going to be reluctant to part with *Susan J* on whom much had been lavished in their 18 year custodianship. However, we were reassured to think that they appeared to think that we might suit her. We took the plunge and agreed that they

would continue her winter maintenance programme and storage ashore at the very nice RMYC at Sandbanks. Like all "gaffers" as far as we can see, the Shaw's have been a mine of information, help and encouragement. We were able to watch some of her maintenance and help them re rig her for re launching. After completing the Bill of Sale they took us on a day sail in early April (2017) before they went to the Netherlands and were eventually able to secure "Nomad", a rather larger gaff cutter for themselves.

While we knew all along we were on a very steep learning curve, all this although immensely helpful, can never fully prepare one for ownership of a large 25 year old traditional, gaff rigged yacht. What follows, is our initial experiences in taking on delivering, cruising and participating in events in *Susan J* as her third custodians.

Susan J is a Heard 28 gaff cutter. Her glass fibre hull was moulded by Martin Heard in Mylor Bridge in 1991 and she was completed by Traditional Yacht Services on the IOW in 1992 by her first owners.

The week before Easter as proud if apprehensive new owners and with son in law Matt we extricated *Susan J* not for the last time, from the confines of Saltern's Marina into Poole Harbour. Within ten minutes, as her new skipper I had strayed from the, tortuous channel and she was hard aground on the sand!

Forward, reverse, crew go forward and back to the bow to try and lift the keel. Where is the kedge and warp? There are no legs! Then a miracle, in the form of a chequered RIB, appears alongside. The subsequent conversation over the revving engine went something like this:

"Are you a member?"

"Er... No"

"Would you like a tow ? "

"Yes Please ! "

Clearly there were no alternator belt problems then. We were soon back where we should have been.

The following week in school, where he is teacher, Matt is asked by a pupil:

"Do you sail, sir?"

"Er.... No, why?"

"I was with my dad, when we pulled this really old boat off a sand bank in the harbour. I am sure I saw you aboard!"

"Oh.... yes that was me, I was on my father in law's gaffer!"

Unfortunately, a search later on, revealed that "Sea Start" does not operate in the far SW but - note to skipper - to join if attending OGA 55 in Cowes next year.

Back in the channel we motored to a slightly less crowded (yes it was still April!) area off Brownsea Island and eventually hoisted the sails, for the first time alone.

We motor sailed, as we are supposed to, towards the entrance of Poole Harbour. As we were about to pass astern of the chain ferry, a change in engine note, steam and the temp dial went off the scale! No problem as we had been shown by Dan how to adjust the belt with a rasp and mallet - so we sailed (we had little choice) to Studland, anchored under sail and had lunch in the glorious early spring sunshine. Two hours later, Matt and the skipper had



Julie and Matt "First sail"

been unable to shift the alternator, despite deploying a comprehensive socket set, acquired from ex brother in law's garage in the Lakes some years ago. However, after a phone call to Dan, among the five spare alternator belts aboard, we found the orange "emergency belt", this we pulled onto the water pump. We thought that should give us a few minutes of power to facilitate "parking" amongst the rather expensive motor boats at Saltern's Marina. We raised anchor, under sail and broad reached at 7 knots past all the other yachts using their engine (as per Reed's instructions) and managed to drop sail in the north channel with the engine ticking over before our first pontoon berthing on our own.

The following day the local engineers explained which bolts we should have also undone, before we broke the rasp and we managed to fit a new belt. The third day of ownership was spent off St Alban's head, having reefed successfully and had plenty of time to reflect on the importance of "tidal gates". Further berthing practice resulted in only minimal "loss of paint" and a partial ducking of the skipper off the pontoon, due to a misunderstanding over who was pulling on the mooring line. We managed to ship the bowsprit and left *Susan J* at Saltern's over the

Easter break.

After Easter, we departed towards Portland but anchored in Mupe Bay to avoid a night berthing. We were so relaxed the next day, idyllically anchored on our own and whipping various rope ends that we ended up berthing the following day after dark instead!. Fortunately, several hundred yards of empty pontoon helped.



First night at anchor Warbarrow Bay

While Julie explored the Bill on foot and by bus, the skipper, having camped with only a Primus stove for years, discovered that Gaz refills are now £29 for 2.75 kg. A subsequent Google search has proved that with parts for the same sum, one can decant refills from the much cheaper and redundant BBQ Calor cylinders at home. A further lesson in belt adjusting resulted in another broken belt by the engineer's screwdriver in Portland but we have now acquired a large tyre lever and another very small, if expensive, socket wrench and can adjust or change the belt in ten minutes, preferably when dry.

Just as well as despite an anxious night, we confidently passed Portland Bill within shaking distance of the early tourists but then had to motor, learning to use the auto helm, in a flat calm across Lyme Bay entering Torquay at dusk rather than Brixham at night. We left "Susan J" for three nights and returned with Richard Wells, with whom I had completed the Three Rivers Race, in an Enterprise, twice, many years ago. Armed with the obligatory bottle of port, we had an uneventful sail around Berry Head to Dartmouth, where the steam trains provided some diversion. Off Start Point the MSI added an imminent F8 gale between forecasts. It was brief and fortunately had disappeared by the next routine broadcast. We had plenty of reefing practice and we were snug on the pontoon in the Yealm well before dusk - for a change.

A brisk sail into Plymouth Sound under jib and double reefed main got us alongside a hammerhead (pew!) at the Mayflower Marina. Crew change over the weekend allowed several trips to the excellent chandlers and, of course, Jolly Jack's. Now, with Mike Beckett of *Bonita*

aboard for ten days we had more gaffer expertise and effectively our own shipwright and surveyor. By the first morning a leaking light tube had been removed and resealed and we were off to Fowey and then *Susan J*'s new mooring in the Helford River.

After, one night and with an easterly gale forecast, we decided to sit it out in Falmouth, from where Julie could get a train home. *Susan J* buried her bow sprit repeatedly while on the outside of the Yacht Haven so we were glad to be able to raft up inside the following morning. From there we spent a day watching the other yachts and pontoons struggle and fished out a hapless gent complete with rucksack and one oar. He had lost his dinghy, while failing to reach his moored boat, which was probably more comfortable riding it out than the rest of us.



Falmouth Yachthaven on the outside pontoon

Mike and I then sailed *Susan J* up to the Fal and sheltered alongside the pontoon with plenty of room to adapt the cockpit cover and generally fettle things up before returning to her mooring in the Helford River where a night on board in an easterly swell proved invaluable as it demonstrated the close proximity of a neighbouring yacht on a rather longer mooring strop rather than the prescribed chain.

On a gentle, fine reach to the Lizard on a lovely clear April, morning we were overtaken by a sleek and attractive Bermudan sloop, whose owners were taking photos. We ran straight across Mounts Bay to Newlyn, managing to retract our bow sprit and remove all sail outside the harbour. Another hammerhead beckoned inside and a very enjoyable fish "taster" at the Newlyn Seafood Cafe. It was there we met Miranda Delmar-Morgan and Edward and she showed us the lovely photographs of "*Susan J*" she had taken, one of which now heads *Susan J*'s entry in the OGA Boat register. They were reluctantly planning to sell *Polar Bear* which has

served them well since being found abandoned three weeks after the 1979 Fastnet Race.



Susan J off Coverack

photo: Miranda Delmar-Morgan

Lack of time and the persistent easterlies persuaded us to beat back to the Helford. Two reefs, water over both side decks and skipper and the boat were both thoroughly tested. The leak into the fore cabin was located to where the deck beams meet at the stem. In glorious sunshine and strong winds at the mooring the next day, we dried everything out and administered large amounts of Sikaflex to the leak. It has certainly slowed things down but has not cured it. Mike in the meantime moved the fresh water filter, so the bilge pump diverter could be deployed, fixed the oven door and replaced the crumbling alloy support for the central grab pole, amongst further fettling.

We now felt confident enough to participate in Falmouth Classics and duly entered, with a view to completing the course with no "loss of paint". We planned to arrive in good time, it was only 5 miles down wind but all the batteries were flat. Steve kindly used the Helford Ferry to jump start us, melting one of Ian's leads in the process. So we arrived late and were rafted too far out to benefit from the shore power. We were greeted by Martha, Geoff Jones's daughter from *Calismarde*, a fifty year old Bermudan sloop, who had cruised to the Baltic with us on *Bonita* last summer but unfortunately had been unable to reach the Classics as planned due to repairs. Martha was now part of the Falmouth University "helping team" and we immediately press ganged her as crew for the first two races. On Saturday and Sunday we were joined, by Sarah and friend Libby, who were renting our flat. In the event, glorious weather and light winds ensured a very enjoyable three days.

Despite being one of the first across the line in the first race, not having a clue where the moveable windward mark was and retiring from the second race as we were four classes behind at the start, we were actually placed in the series, albeit last. Possibly it was because we had waited to be retired through lack of wind in the third race! Not usually noted as a music festival fan, the skipper felt that Falmouth Sea Shanties was perfect, entrance was by the pint and the change to the RNLI to be repeated as required – and no mud!



Calmly rafted at Falmouth YH"

Back to the Helford Rally, always enjoyable for its BBQ and meal at the Helford River Sailing Club. If anything, the weather was better with even lighter winds but it was great to be able to take part this year

Although only June, we had lived aboard for several weeks and, with a relatively high fibre diet, the heads gave up and blocked. During the Falmouth event, the skipper almost missed the BBQ at the RCYC, while



SWGaffers Helford Rally Devon Maid, Thumble and Aeolus

having to replace a cracked, fresh water filter housing. We think it was the gradual emptying of all the fresh water into the bilge that had drained the batteries. There followed a three weeks period on our mooring of stocktaking, battery replacement, preliminary electrical archaeology and a complete refurbishment of the heads plumbing. We had found pin hole leaks in the inlet pipe

and so decided to invest in very thick, butyl sanitary hose, at £19+ a meter, and several plastic bottles of cheap vinegar. We have, as yet, had no further problems.

Our first season of gaffer custodianship has been exciting, stressful but immensely rewarding. *Susan J*

has proved to be the sea kindly, comfortable, handy boat we were looking for. As we anticipated, it is the boat which is looking after us rather than the other way around. Yes, there have been a few problems with the boat and we are embarking on a long list of winter layup jobs. However, these are to be expected after 25 years and as we sort each one out our confidence and satisfaction increases. We have really appreciated the opportunity, to meet other gaffers and their boats, afforded by Ben, John and Don in our first season and have enjoyed meeting lots of other "gaffers" now in the context of their boats. Without exception, they have been friendly and helpful. I am sure we are not the only boat that has achieved more this season than we would have done on our own. Perhaps we are beginning to get the hang of "gaffering"!



David and Matt—relaxing with a glass in hand !

NB All the photos in this article were taken by David or Julie Patuck other than one taken by Miranda Delmar-Morgan.

Riding the Tide with the Sail and Oar Fleet – Semaine du Golfe 2017

David Bewick

Attending *la Semaine du Golfe du Morbihan* is probably the great event to which most small boat sailors aspire. I certainly did and I took part for the first time in 2015 with *Aberrare* and my crew, Andrew. Whilst we had a great time, things did not go entirely to plan for us and when the 2017 event came along, we felt we had some unfinished business there and we were very keen to give it another go.

We took the overnight ferry from Plymouth to Roscoff on the Sunday and by the middle of Monday afternoon we had launched the boat and put her on a mooring at Port Anna, parked the trailer and got ourselves established on the campsite at Conleau. We were ready!

Tuesday: party time on the Ile d'Arz.

We had always intended to row out of the rather congested harbour at Port Anna into clear water but, when we got there, there was not a breath of wind. On the positive side, though, the sky was a deep blue and the sun was shining so it was not great hardship for us to just carry on rowing. As we got within a mile or so of the beach on the Ile d'Arz, the wind did start to come in from the south west but we carried on rowing and were among the first of our flotilla to arrive. Very soon, the beach and the moorings filled up with boats as all the other flotillas arrived and their crews went ashore to enjoy the big party under the pine trees. There was probably something there to suit most people:



Ile d'Arz - briefing before the dance . Aberaire behind with the pale blue hull
photo: Mark Darley

oysters, vast pans of paella, wine, beer and cider to consume, Breton music and dancing to enjoy, old friends to find and new ones to make. It would have been very



Ile d'Arz

photo: David Bewick

easy to stay longer but, by mid-afternoon, we had to get ready to leave. This time we rowed out through the moorings, put the sails up, and had a lovely sail back to Port Anna with the wind and the flooding tide. Our track for the day was 9.8 miles.

Wednesday: a day of drama - Port Anna to Locmari-aquer

Wednesday started with a gentle downwind sail in the sunshine along the northern route of the Golfe past Arradon and Port Blanc. It was here that we experienced the first effects of the notorious Morbihan currents as we were swept around the top of Ile aux Moine by the ebbing tide across an area of rather strange of ripple. As we approached Larmour Baden things got much livelier, still, as we went through the narrows to the south of Ile Berder. The main problem here whilst moving downwind and down tide was to maintain steerage and we needed to use the oars to achieve this. We had a leisurely stop in Larmour Baden to give us time for lunch and for the tide to turn. As we prepared to leave, one chap decided he was going to walk across a couple of small boats to reach his own that was tied up on the outside. He succeeded in capsizing both the little boats and ended up in the drink between them. Order was soon restored by the SNSM safety crew but the strange thing was that his mates on his own boat did not get involved at all – making us wonder whether it was perhaps not the first time he had done something like this!

Our early evening entertainment was to ride the tidal shute between the mainland and Ile Berder. Here, when the rising tide breaks through across the causeway to the island there is a rush of current and a drop of about a foot to the down-tide side. Our descent was carefully choreographed to take place at 17.00 for the benefit of the TV cameras. There was very little wind at the time so we rowed through, tied up to a buoy for an hour, and



Taking the tide at Ile Berder

photo: David Bewick

It was all good fun but it was actually a bit tame compared to our experiences earlier in the day. The flotilla then reassembled for a very pleasant early evening sail across to Locmariaquer. When we arrived, we were delighted to find that all the pontoon berths had been left empty for us and that we could all tie up without any problems. Until we de-rigged the boat, that is! As I leant over the stern to remove the rudder, it seemed a bit stiff so I gave it a good hard pull. The rudder came free but, as it did, there was a loud plop as the bottom pintle came off the transom and dropped straight into the oggin! My first thought was one of horror that our week had just ended there but then but we took stock of the situation. There were chaps dressed up as pirates who were there to help the fleet. I explained to one of them, in my best schoolboy French, what had happened and he suggested I went to the harbour office for help. I did, and I was told to speak to one of the pirates on the pontoon! Things were not looking too good at this point but the lady in the office had another think and told me I needed to speak to Pierre. Pierre was obviously the local "Mr Fixit". He told me what no-one else had, that the harbour dries at

low tide and advised me to have a meal and a few drinks and to come back at about 22.00 and have a look in the mud. We took his advice, and when we returned and after only a few minutes of tentatively feeling around in the gloopy stuff over the back of the transom, my finger touched something hard. To my amazement, I was able to grab and retrieve the missing pintle. We were so lucky that the fleet was not leaving Locmariaquer until after lunch the following day, so we had the time, with the help of some friends, to find the bits and pieces we needed to refit the pintle. I have no idea why it came off – I had never felt it move at all during the last five years and I am sure we had not hit anything during the day. We considered ourselves to be very fortunate indeed that it had come off where it did and that we had the time to find it and re-attach it to the boat before the fleet set sail again. Our track for the day was 13 miles.

Thursday: a good hard sail – Locmariaquer to Saint Armel

By the time of our departure from Locmariaquer on Thursday afternoon the wind had picked up a bit to about F4 and had swung round to the NE. This gave us a beat most of the way to Saint Armel so I tied a single reef in the mainsail. As Andrew rowed us out through the narrow channel between the oyster beds, I absent-mindedly decided to check the centreboard and found it was jammed solid. Clearly, me jumping up and down in the boat whilst finding and re-fitting the rudder pintle had shoved some of the gloopy mud up inside the case. I grabbed the tool box, quickly unscrewed the cap off the top of the case, and soon got the board free. Some people have a hole in the top of their centreboard case so they can poke a stick down it at times like this. Mine will have one, too, by the time you read this!

When we got out of the channel, everything was getting a bit lively so, once we had the sails up, we set off into the stiff breeze. Without trying too hard, we found ourselves close to the front of the fleet but as we had missed most of the briefing whilst fixing the boat, we were not entirely sure of the route. At one point, we realised that some of the boats in front of us were being swept around by a very strong counter-current so we immediately tacked back into the main stream and got the most enormous shove from the tide on our lee bow as we charged through the gap between the islands. By this point we were right at the front of the fleet so, near Arzon, we decided it would be prudent to pick up a buoy, have a well-earned snack, and wait for the rest. After a while, they duly appeared and we all set off again on the southerly route past Ile d'Arz up to Saint Armel.



Moored at Locmariaquer

photo: David Bewick



St Armel

photo: David Bewick

At one point, while Andrew was on the helm, I thought we were a bit underpowered so I made a half-hearted attempt to take the reef out but the knots had pulled up so tight that I gave up. A few minutes later, I was pleased I had as the wind picked up again. We arrived in Saint Armel and doubled up alongside another boat on a mooring before going ashore on the water taxi. We were soon enjoying our well-earned food and drink at the end of a long day afloat and relaxing whilst watching the most beautiful sunset over the water. Our track for the day was 16 miles.

Friday: Saint Armel to Plougoumelen

On Friday, we had a very early start from the campsite so we could leave Saint Armel at 09.00. It was a lovely sunny morning and the light wind was blowing from the east so we had a very pleasant gentle sail down to the southern end of Ile aux Moines. From there, we sailed across to join the main channel as the tide ebbed out towards the entrance. This gave us a fast and furious ride, again using the oars to maintain steerage, as we struggled to head right towards Larmor Baden. I don't think any of our fleet came seriously to grief here but I did see one local crew on the lee shore, bailing their boat out. We dropped the anchor for a while as people sorted themselves out and then we set off again with the start of the flood tide up the Auray river. In mid-afternoon, there was a scheduled stop for drinks and oysters at Fort Espagnol. This required the whole fleet to moor up within striking distance of a barge in the river. Chaos ensued with boats rafting up in several rows six or seven deep alongside the barge. Then, no sooner had all the boats moored up than someone decided it was time to leave. A kind soul somewhere inside us decided to untie a group of four boats, including ourselves, that was set free to go down wind and down tide all tied together. We managed to untie

ourselves before anything too dramatic happened but it did nothing for our good humour. This was soon restored, however, as we edged up the beautiful river past Le Bono. As we approached Plougoumelen, the crew of one of the British boats (that will remain nameless) stopped to take some photos. As they set off again under oars, they managed to achieve a direct hit on one of the port hand channel markers. It is a testament to their great skill that they managed to bring the stem of their small boat into such precise alignment with a six inch post (this was no glancing blow). In any event, there was a great clang, the boat bounced back about two feet, the crew ended up in the bottom of the boat and I swear the pole was left gently quivering from the impact. I must admit, we nearly wet ourselves!

We rafted up off Plougoumelen and were soon taken ashore to enjoy yet more good food, drink and music.

Our track for the day was 17 miles and a maximum speed over the ground of 10.4 kts through the tide race!

Saturday: The Grand Parade - Plougoumelen to Port Anna

The start on Saturday was so early that we had been given the briefing for the day the evening before. The key thing seemed to be to go *gauche, gauche, gauche!* in order stand any chance of making it into Port Navalo without being swept out to sea with the ebb. With this set in our minds, we were ready to leave our mooring by 08.30. We made our way slowly down the river with the tide and mostly against the gentle SW wind. The centreboard jammed again - weed this time! After a quick stop at Fort Espagnol, we carried on and later re-grouped near one of the small islands. We could see Port Navalo in the distance and, as we got nearer, we also saw the boats in front of us being driven hard to seaward in the tide race. This time, it was a wind over tide situation and as we were picked up by the current, the apparent wind speed jumped from about 10 kts to nearer 20. We then saw a big square-rigger coming down the channel and had no choice but to bear away to go behind her (I was too pre-occupied to get her name). Unfortunately, this put us straight into the violent swirling eddies in the region of the *Grand Mouton* rocks and the starboard hand channel marker. We very nearly capsized at one point but made it through, albeit with very dry mouths. This was soon put right in Port Navalo when the French crew in a Bay Raider we tied up alongside shared a nerve-calming tot of cool Rose with us.

We went ashore for lunch with some apprehension knowing that, when the tide turned, we would be going back down the race with hundreds of other boats in the grand parade. In the event, this turned out not to be not quite as nerve-racking as the morning trip.

We went through somewhat earlier on the new flood tide and with the wind this time. Andrew rowed like a demon to give us steerage through the worst bits and we soon settled down to enjoy the ride home with the rest of the fleet.

We had anticipated the number of boats that would be taking part in the parade but we were amazed by the thousands of spectators that lined the route. The parade was a thoroughly good-natured affair and even the powerful spectator RIBs were well-marshalled by the police. With the wind and the tide, we soon got back to Port Anna. As we approached, we dropped the sails and then rowed straight around to Barrarac'h's slipway where we recovered the boat. With a bit of shuffling around, we managed to get the boat and trailer back to the campsite that evening ready for the journey home the following day.



Pirates and Vikings battling the strong tides photo: David Bewick

Back at the campsite, we were sorry to hear that one couple in a brave little boat (a Morbic 10, I think) in our fleet had capsized in the tide race in the afternoon. Apparently, they got spun round and round in a fast-moving vortex and went in. The safety crew were soon on the scene to help and the skipper recovered his composure sufficiently to complete the parade. I salute him!

Our track for the day was 19 miles.

To sum up...

I think were we very lucky to take part in what turned out to be a classic *Semaine du Golfe* in perfect weather conditions. An event like this involves long days on the water in beautiful surroundings, good company and good food and drink. There are also occasional challenges thrown in for good measure. Some of these challenges are the ones we always face on the water: the tides and the weather. Others are less predictable and are to do with our boats and the bits of them that may break at inconvenient moments, despite our best endeavours to prevent it. Then, of course, there is the human factor. While most of the people at an event like this will be charming, like-minded individuals, there may be times when even they behave in ways that will frustrate and confuse us. All in all, though, it adds up to quite an adventure and I commend it to you.

*A version of this article was first published in the magazine **Watercraft**.*

If you have a sailing adventure or any tales of boat maintenance or repair you would like to share please send them to the Editor.

Good photos to accompany the story would be greatly appreciated.

To Paimpol and back on sailing trawler *Vigilance*

John Gallagher

After hearing glowing tales of it I have wanted to sail to Paimpol for the famed biennial *Fete du Chant de Marin* for some many years. So, in 2015 with my Tamarisk 24 preened and ready we tried to find a window in the then prevailing wild weather to get there but with gales approaching faster than expected we abandoned our attempt. This year we had to find a way to get there and we were fortunate to get a very reasonably priced passage on Brixham's iconic old sailing trawler *Vigilance*. This grand old lady had a



Vigilance BM 76

photo: from Vigilance website

fine merry crew which really made for an excellent venture. *Vigilance* is an 80'LOD ketch, almost 100' LOS which can take up to 19 for overnight passages. But there were 11 of us on this trip, with skipper John Ashford, deputy Coxswain of Torbay Lifeboat. Most of our fellow voyagers were volunteers and crew but everybody took part in handling the boat.

We had a briefing the evening before and set sail early, initially under power then soon with staysail, mizzen and main giving us a handsome 6 – 7 Knts. Guernsey was our destination and we arrived after a pleasant sail at the entrance to Peter Port in the late afternoon. This was where the good organisation and pre-planning faltered as the pre-booked berth had gone and the harbour staff seemed deaf to their VHF calls. But after an hour or so of diddling we made it. Just as well too with the fine weather vanishing as a vigorous low rolled in. And it came in with a fury with heavy showers and strong wind. The plan was to leave the

next morning but the weather was still foul so we had an interesting shopping/social day ashore. The plan then was to sail that night but the Captain kindly amended that so in a civilised manner we left after the rain and strong winds had abated early the next morning.

It was a day sail to reach Paimpol for the tidal window of HW + 2 (or -2.5) on springs as Paimpol is some 8 metres above chart datum. The tidal shift there can be 9.3 M. Also, there can be cross currents of 3Knts so care and planning are crucial. When we reached the entry area there boats everywhere, many of which had come out to greet the gathering fleet as it turned to enter the lock into old fishing harbour. And the quays were lined with many hundreds of welcoming spectators. The welcome was impressive not only from all the spectators but in the reception hall that



Crew and passengers with the skipper behind the wheel.

evening, where good food and wine were laid on for just a few euros. There was live music from strolling groups with some smaller groups doing their own thing, occasionally involving dancing and jigging on the tables. It was a whole lot of noisy fun.



Recouvrance being maneuvered almost in her own length.



When I awoke the next morning and went on deck to take in the scene I saw an elephant walking by! I closed my eyes and cursed the drink but when I opened them it was still there. The music had started, slow moving crowds of people were all around and through the middle of them came this elephant with a dancing sari clad maiden atop ! I noticed it had a cataract and then being an astute retired vet, I also noted it also had an engine.

There were craft and food tents all along the harbour-sides. Behind these were shops, bistros and bars as well as houses. Beyond these, the harbour area had been cordoned off with one entry point where the thousands coming to see the festival paid their dues. Whilst entry in a classic boat was free and goodie bags were given to each boat, entry through the gate was quite expensive. I think the day entry fee was 30 euros.

As the day progressed groups of traditional Breton dancers danced their way around the harbour. A fine



Earl of Pembroke

Breton band with bagpipes processed around as did other groups. Small bands were to be found at different sites with a variety of music from Celtic, Caribbean, pop and jazz. There were a variable three stages with music much of the time, the main one of which really came alive in the evenings. The fine old three masted barque, *Earl of Pembroke* from Charlestown was used as a stage in the evenings mostly for Celtic music, some pop and shanties.

Whilst walking through the crowds on the second day we came across a pair of oxen ! These were impressive and started nuzzling the onlookers to their great delight. Like the elephant both remarkable creatures had been created some years previously and travelled to festivals around France. But they were just part of the colourful array of sights. Tall stilted ladies one pushing an oversized chair and a stilted puppet master with a human puppet pirate were also to be seen.



The 200 or so boats were the centre piece of the festivities and the public queued, sometimes for ages, to go aboard the imposing larger vessels particularly the brigantine *Phoenix* from Charlestown, the Portuguese caravel *Sagres* and the Spanish caravel *Vittoria*. The latter is a replica of Magellan's famous vessel which first circumnavigated the globe. Also, the schooner *Recouvrance* built in Brest partly with public funding during the nineties. But all manner of large and small boats were there down to a home made punt used by the "music man". And on a couple of boats music accompanied dance/gymnastics in the rigging! Brixham trawlers made a good show with not only *Vigilance* but *Provident* and *Leader* were also there.

Having so many fascinating boats all together gave the opportunity of going aboard and looking around them, chatting to skippers and crew and hearing their stories which occupied many happy hours. Then when evening came exploring the enchanting old town to find that gourmet restaurant was a must. And so three days in the old fish harbour passed in no time.

Leaving harbour was another logistic experience but it worked. Our journey back straight to Brixham in fair weather went very well and *Vigilance* was tucked up on her pontoon there in good order. Altogether it was a good cruise in good company. We are already organising to go to the next festival there in 2019.



Above: Latern sails of Sagres

Below: The music man



Below: Filing out of the lock , Hydrograf last in line



Above: Gwenili second in, Hydrograf in background

Left: Tide out at Lock entrance.

Below: Vittoria



All photos in this article are by the author except that of Vigilance



Boats for Sale

Pegasus

Pegasus is a ferro cement gaff rigged Essex Smack. Her hull was professionally cast in 1979/80, one of 12, by Ferro marine Services of Burnham on Crouch to a John French design. She is a very comfortable four berth cruising boat with full standing headroom. Her galley has an oven, the heads have a shower and there is a large hot water tank.

The hull was delivered to Hayling Island, Hants but regrettably the purchaser never touched her due to ill health. Then Jeremy Swadling of Waterloooville purchased the hull sometime in the late 80's and fitted her out at his Plumbers Merchants yard (hence the fittings in the Heads and the large hot water tank). She was launched some time in early 90's as *Grace* and used as a cruising boat by the family.

After approximately 10 years she was sold on to another Jeremy on Isle of Wight, kept in East Cowes and raced regularly including 'Round the Island'.

She was purchased by me in April 2010 and used for cruising and Solent OGA events. Raced in "Round the Island" in 2010, she was 5th in her Class.

A new mast and bow sprit were fitted in 2011. In spring 2013 she was lifted out and has been ashore since at Millbrook. A reconditioned engine was fitted in 2017 and extensive work on the hull and bulwarks was carried out but painting and varnishing to bulwarks and cappings will not be completed until decent weather next spring! She has a full suit of sails including water sail and tri sail. Equipment includes a plotter, VHF and sound system.



She is for sale at £20,000 or offers. Shared ownership would be considered as owner not likely to use her on her own.

Enquiries ring Andrea—07767 411741

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Puffin Bach

Puffin Bach is a sturdy boat with very sweet lines capable of serious cruising. She combines the practicality of a GRP hull with charm of wooden construction above the gunwale and is a real delight to see, sail and live aboard. Since buying her in 2007 we have sailed her along the entire Welsh Coastline, the Bristol Channel, Southern Ireland (Baltimore and back), both coasts of Devon and Cornwall and to Lundy, Skomer and the Isles of Scilly. She has comfortably handled all the conditions we have been out in, sometimes including beyond force 6 and we have always felt confident of her abilities.



We are offering Puffin Bach for sale in full commission and good condition for £10,000. There is a full description of her including a recent survey at <http://cokerwood.webplus.net/> and if you would like more information or to view her on her current mooring on the Truro River we can be contacted at lovelockda@gmail.com or on 01935 891328.

Old Dan

Old Dan was built in 1990 and has been in the present ownership for 17 years but unfortunately the owner's age has made him feel that reluctantly he must part with her.

Her dimensions are: LOD 19' 3", LOS 22' 6", LWL 17' 6", Beam 7'2", Draft 1' 6" / 4'

She has been sailed regularly, taking part in many South West Gaffers events and has been kept ashore under cover in winter. Her inboard diesel engine had a £2000 overhaul last year, she has recently renewed sails and comes complete with anchor, warps, fenders, hand bearing-compass, chemical toilet and trailer.

A much loved, well maintained boat ready to sail.

£10,000 o.n.o



Enquiries to Alan Miller-Williams: 01548 830039, alanjohnmw@gmail.com

Draft South West Programme of Events

January 17th	Informal evening get together 7.00 for 7.30	The China House, Plymouth contact: John Gallagher editor@southwestgaffers.org.uk
February 11 th	Visit to Cornish Crabbers and lunch at Rock S.C .	Rock, Cornwall contact: Don Garman cornwall@southwestgaffers.org.uk
April 14 th	Fitting Out Lunch—speaker tbc	Royal Western Y.C., Plymouth
May 26 th - 27 th	Brixham Heritage Sailing Regatta	contact: Brixhamheritagesailing.org.uk
June 22 nd - 24 th	Falmouth Classics	contact: Falmouthclassics.org.uk
June 25 th - 27 th	SW Gaffers Helford River Rally	Helford River S.C. / Port Navas Y.C. contact: Don Garman cornwall@southwestgaffers.org.uk
July 6 th - 8 th	SW Gaffers Annual Race and Rally	Plymouth Yacht Haven Contact: David Bewick secretary@southwestgaffers.org.uk
July	Plymouth Classics	tbc presently in the process of being verified
August	Fowey Classics	dates tbc contact: Foweyclassics.com
August 18 th	Dittisham Regatta Gaffers Race	-
August 16 th - 19 th	OGA 55th Anniversary Rally	River Medina, Isle of Wight contact: David Bewick secretary@southwestgaffers.org.uk
September 1 st - 2 nd	Dartmouth Regatta—Gaffer Races	contact: Dartmouthregatta.co.uk
September 15 th	Brixham Heritage Rally	contact: Brixhamheritagesailing.org.uk
October 13 th	Visit to Penpol Boatyard, Restronguet	Hosted by Ashley and Holly Butler with a pasty and a pint contact: Don Garmin, cornwall@southwestgaffers.org.uk
November 10th	Laying Up Lunch and AGM	Royal Western Y.C., Plymouth

The OGA 55th Anniversary Event

David Bewick

The OGA 55th Anniversary event has been well-publicised in the latest issue of the *Gaffers Log* that you should have received at the end of November. People who are considering attending the event have been encouraged to submit a form on the OGA website and several people from the Area have already indicated that they may take part with their boats. If you are intending to do the same, **please fill out the form on the website** so we can think about a possible cruise in company from these parts. We know that the Solent Area are thinking about organising a feeder rally in Weymouth that could be a good stop-over for our boats. There will be something for trailer sailers at the Anniversary event, too, with several options for accommodation in the vicinity of the Folly Inn on the River Medina and plans for accompanied cruises in the Solent in the days leading up to the main Rally.

If you don't want to take your own boat to the Rally or if you don't have a boat of your own, you can still take part. We have the option of chartering Luke Powell's iconic Scilly Island Pilot Cutter "Agnes" for the event. In outline, this would involve a three-day trip from Falmouth to Cowes, three days at the Rally and then three days back to Falmouth. A crew of six could be accommodated. This would be charged at the normal charter boat rates, but I would hope for some help with this from OGA funds. I have sailed on Agnes and she is a fantastic boat and the food is good, too.

Please see: <https://workingsail.co.uk/>



If you are interested in taking part in the event in this way, please let me know as soon as possible.

David Bewick. (secretary@southwestgaffers.org.uk)

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the perfect surprise Christmas present !*