

Northern Ireland Area Report to the January 2021 ACM

It will come as no surprise that 2020 was a dreadfully bad year for gaffer related matters for all regions, but particularly NIOGA. At the last OGA AGM, held in Bristol in January 2020, we were going through a process of rebuilding NIOGA as it had been teetering on extinction. A survey had been issued to all the members in the previous year in an attempt to ascertain level of engagement and what kind of activities we should pursue. The response was poor, and we decided the best way forward was to build an event around the Peel Traditional Boat weekend.

At the Bristol AGM there was a meeting of all the OGA regions that bordered the Irish sea, and it was agreed (others were thinking along the same lines) that this would be a good course of action. NIOGA was going to use the 100' LOA "Volharding" Dutch ostzeetjalk, currently chartered by Silvery Light Sailing based in Newry, as a centrepiece during the Peel festival. The idea was to charge OGA members a preferential (i.e., cheaper) rate for a berth on Volharding from Ireland to Peel return. This was to engage those members who had no boats or small boats but would not sail them to Peel. Other NIOGA gaffers would be invited to sail in company there and back and would be able to use "Volharding" as a mothership. NIOGA would have been in the heart of the Peel festival and there might even have been a few musicians on board.

We got as far as booking our berth at Peel and the rest as they say, is biology. Obviously, the plan fell apart with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic and it also wrecked other plans around maritime festivals and large sea-going activities.

At the time of writing, we have been approached by a council to (possibly) contribute to a programme celebrating a coastal town's maritime heritage. Negotiations are proceeding.

We have also reached out to other gaffer small boat (trailerable) collectives with a view to either hosting or becoming part of an already existing event.

While the above may or may not happen, we would urge OGA to encourage people to become involved in on-line activities such as theory navigation classes as well as postings relevant to OGA. The Off Centre Harbor and Sampson Boat Boat Co postings are particularly good. Failing that, one can always improve one's marlinespike seamanship!