

Small Boats Report for 2022 ACM.

It is now a year since I took on my role as Small Boats Secretary. Even though it was a far from normal year, there has been a good level of activity for small boats within the OGA and over a quarter of all OGA members now profess an interest in them.

I have always felt that the key to having a vibrant small boats scene within the OGA is communication. There is already a good variety of small boat events that are organised or actively supported by the OGA Areas. One of my goals has been to give a higher level of visibility to these events outside the Area that has organised them. I have therefore developed the Small Boats part of the OGA website to have Events listings and a Calendar so that it mirrors those used by the Areas. I hope that we will soon get to the point that all small boat events are listed here. I can easily post information about small boat events on the OGA Facebook site, too. I have sent out a couple of newsletters to the OGA Small Boat community during the past year. These are not linked to a pre-determined publication schedule but, rather, on me feeling I have something to say. Finally, I have taken over from Mike Stevens as the regular contributor to Watercraft magazine. I want to use all these channels to promote small boat activity within the OGA. My plea to the Areas is to let me have details of your small boat events as soon as you have them so we can give them the visibility they deserve.

Looking to events further ahead, the OGA60 celebrations will be taking place in 2023. I am sure there will be several small boat events held as part of this, but I wanted to give you an early warning that we are planning a Cross-England Challenge (or whatever else we might decide to call it) for small boats. This will involve a passage starting in Bristol and then going along the Kennet and Avon canal and the Thames to arrive in time for the “main event” on the East Coast.

It has been a big year for the Gaffling 4.1. The design was given its new name as a result of the competition held in the run-up to the last AGM. The first boat to be launched as a Gaffling 4.1 was the “Suffolk boat” (subsequently named “Suffling”) that had been built by Pete Thomas and his team. This boat was launched as part of the EC Swallows and Amazons event in July and the event was used, symbolically, as the “wet launch” of the newly named class. It was also a good excuse for a party! Since then, a further Gaffling has been launched in the NE as a result of a close co-operation between the Area and a local school. Two other Gafflings are currently “in build” which will bring the total to six.

The kits for building the first few Gafflings were cut by Demon Yachts, but they do not wish to be our long-term suppliers. We have been working hard to identify a new supplier of kits and I am pleased to be able to say that we have agreed, in principle, that this will be Fyne Boat Kits. I hope they will soon be able to supply plywood-only and complete kits for the boat.

David Bewick.

Small Boat Secretary.