

OGA SOLENT AREA REPORT TO THE JANUARY 2022 ACM

We put the 2021 programme together with fingers firmly crossed, but although some changes to shoreside activities were needed, we managed to successfully hold all the events. We have a full programme planned for 2022 - and those fingers remain crossed!

During last winter we began keeping in touch electronically, using Zoom for our AGM, quizzes, and a book club. All Committee meetings now use zoom, saving both the time and expense of travelling to distant meeting venues and generally getting better attendances.

After the disappointment of cancellation in 2020, we held a successful Yarmouth Regatta (3-6th June), with fifty-nine boats in attendance. This included sixteen Cape Cutters, who joined us for the weekend as part of their 2021 National Rally. Racing took place as usual, but some of the customary shore-based activities were constrained by Covid rules. However, we adapted successfully by, for example, replacing an inside event with a pre-ordered take-away fish & chip supper eaten “al-fresco”. All went home with a 2020 Regatta banner; if the Japanese can do it for the Summer Olympics, why shouldn't we?

We held a Rally at Bucklers Hard in July, in a heat wave. We had sought to attract smaller gaffers and of the seventeen boats attending, half were under 20ft and two of those came on trailers. We aim to hold a small boat-friendly event in Lymington this coming summer in early August.

The Annual Race and Rally (3-5 Sep) attracted twenty-five boats, with both longstanding and new members. The fleet gathered in Cowes on Friday evening and the race was held in the Eastern Solent, with fifteen boats participating. The race was finally shortened due to light winds and gaffers motored up the Hamble to the Elephant Boatyard for a barbecue and prize giving - conducted in the dark! The race was won by Andrew Paterson in *Codling*.

Solent Area led the OGA presence at Southampton Boat Show, where Sue & David Pennison (plus a disappointingly small group of helpers) promoted the organisation to the visiting public for 11 days, using their Golant Gaffer *Satellite* as both floating attraction and accommodation. They also manned a Gaffling 4.1 exhibit, based ashore amongst the wooden boat builders. We are aware of three new memberships already, as the result of the show. However, if this is to be repeated in 2022, we believe that more support from the GMC (including financial contributions towards travel and accommodation costs) is necessary to encourage helpers to come along from further afield to better spread the load.

We have gained around 22 new members during 2021, with a noticeable bias towards smaller vessels. We have lost a similar number of members, with several unfortunately crossing the bar. We are rather concerned that, over recent years, attendances at events have reduced and fewer boats enter races. Roughly 25% of our members seem to be active supporters and it is usually the

same ones. We are conducting a survey of Solent members, asking what we can do to get them to join in more and are looking at ways to make racing less intimidating for the inexperienced.

Looking further ahead, 2023 is the 60th Anniversary of the OGA and Solent will be a party port, based in Cowes. In addition, Solent have been invited to organise the 2023 ACM/AGM and are considering location/venue options. Portsmouth is the current favourite, with its extensive maritime heritage. More anon.

Jeremy Retford
Solent Area Secretary