

BRISTOL CHANNEL AREA

Report to ACM January 2022

2021

2021 was a good year despite the impact of Covid on the Bristol Channel fixture schedule once again. The cancellation of the planned Bristol Channel Yachting Association (BCYA) events in Milford Haven, Bristol and Cardiff was a great shame but it was good to see an event hosted by them taking place in Watchet at the end of August.

The investment by the Marine Group in Watchet Marina is a very welcome development indeed. This once busy and vibrant port is once again available for Gaffers to base themselves in, or indeed to stopover at on passage elsewhere.

A small fleet of Gaffers made their way across the channel for a stopover in Portishead marina at the end of June. Following a most enjoyable sail over in fine weather and a splendid meal in a local restaurant the fleet had a particularly stimulating sail back in a wind against tide force 5 to 6. Good fun but challenging at times for a fleet of small craft.

The series of timed laps took place in Cardiff Bay on Thursdays evenings throughout the year. As a result of several evenings where sailing had to be cancelled it was decided to consolidate the Spring and Autumn series into an overall prize for the year.

This year three programmed channel 'day sails' were completed successfully. These are an opportunity for Gaffers to sail in-company in the Bristol Channel. This is something that many have found invaluable as they got to know this wonderful sailing area. Several additional days were also organised at short notice when the conditions allowed.

The annual Bristol Channel Area OGA race took place this year on the 16th of September in Cardiff Bay. Light and variable winds prevailed throughout, and it was Robert Green sailing his pretty Vivier Jewel 'Lapwing' who navigated his way to the front of the fleet and then disappeared into the distance to take line honours and the trophy on adjusted time.

Monthly zoom calls took place throughout the year. These on-line gatherings have continued to provide a tremendous opportunity to catch up with Gaffers from every part of the Bristol Channel.

Our area publication, Severn Tidings, continues to provide a wealth of interesting and informative articles about our members and their sailing adventures. The Autumn issue was another great example of this and helped to keep us entertained as the nights closed in.

The 2021 area AGM was kindly hosted by the Thornbury Sailing Club at the end of October and, following a fascinating presentation by intrepid long distance Wayfarer sailor Jeremy Warren, a fast, fun, and successful AGM was held.

Key points from it were:

The Bristol Channel paid up membership now stands at 61 as a result of a net increase of 3 on the year.

The year-end accounts of the BC area were presented. Roughly equal amounts of income and expenditure were reported, leaving a balance in the account of £519.26 as of 30th September 2021.

Due to a decision by President Keith McIlwain to move closer to family on the east coast in 2022 and the end of Area Secretary David Botterill tenure, both roles needed to be filled for the year ahead. As a result, Susanne Newbold was nominated for the role of BC Area President and elected unanimously, and Andrew Kelland was nominated for the role of BC area Secretary and again elected unanimously.

2022

Planning for the new season is well underway.

We are working with Tall Ships (Wales) Trust in support of the creation of the Seafair Haven event in Milford Haven. It will be a welcome addition to the 2022 events calendar offering a weeks sailing to gaffers large and small in the beautiful sailing waters at the westerly end of the Bristol Channel.

Seafair Haven will also provide us the opportunity to undertake the youth sponsorship activity previously delayed due to Covid.

The creation of the rest of the 2022 sailing programme is well underway too and once again it is likely that we will incorporate many of the events organised by the BCYA throughout the year.

And finally planning is underway for those events taking place in 2023 in celebration of the OGA's 60th Anniversary.

There is much to look forward to!