

President's Report for the North East area of the OGA  
28 October 2022  
Mark Batey

This report covers the short period from our last AGM on March 8th 2022 to the AGM to be held on 8th November 2022.

I took over as president from Des O'Meara who we must thank for his work and enthusiasm as president. It was his efforts that were behind the push to get Gaffling dinghies into schools in the region. It was decided that our priority should be to re-energise this project which had been paused during the Covid outbreak.

High Tunstall College in Hartlepool had started construction of the first dinghy, but had to stop work on it. Thanks are due to Martin Haigh for his efforts and skills in completing the construction. "Tunstall Tide" is a beautifully finished boat and a credit to his expertise. We met with Mark Tilling, the head teacher at Tunstall College, just before the Easter holidays. He was very enthusiastic about restarting the project, and placed a senior member of staff Lyndsay Reavely in charge. With the dinghy parked on a trailer outside the school entrance for the last week of term, students were soon interested. This resulted in a series of five sail training days for a total of sixteen students to be run at the start of the summer term. With these basic skills established, we launched Tunstall Tide in Hartlepool Marina on 13th July and all the students took turns sailing her. More sailing was planned for the rest of the summer and autumn.

The second dinghy had been started in premises in Blyth by two members of staff of Duchess's High School in Alnwick. Unfortunately they were unable to find space in the school to complete the build, so reluctantly we had to find a new home for the boat. We met David Nisbet, Head of School at James Calvert Spence College, Amble, initially to interest him in a possible third dinghy. However when Alnwick dropped out, he took the opportunity to take over the boat. It is now ready for construction in the Design Department at the school. We hope it will be complete by summer 2023 and ready to be sailed on the River Coquet under the auspices of Coquet Sailing Club.

The enthusiasm of both schools has been infectious, and the benefits to the students of being on the water cannot be underestimated. We are now in the process of investigating whether we have the capacity to take on a third dinghy, where it might find a home, and how it might be funded.

Our other main activity, apart from a social night out in May, was our area rally. This was held at Royal Northumberland Yacht Club in Blyth who were most helpful in the organisation. We held a social sail out on Saturday 20th August with local boat Stella Marjorie being accompanied by Royal Diadem and Henry Frederick Swan from our friends in the North East Maritime Trust. Perhaps the highlight though was the offer from Blyth Tall Ships for us to have a trip on the Williams II. Ten OGA members and friends were helped by the crew on a sail from Blyth to South Shields on a glorious afternoon. A report on the voyage has been written by Sue Wilkinson for inclusion in the winter edition of the Gaffers Log. We reconvened at BTS for a quayside barbecue, accompanied by music and singing.

We are now starting planning for welcoming boats taking part in the Round Britain Challenge as part of the OGA's 60th anniversary who will be visiting Blyth as one of the "party ports" in July 2023.