

OGA Small Boats Report for 2024 ACM.

By most measures, I think the 2023 sailing season for will have to go down as having been rather “challenging” and several of the OGA60 events for small boats were adversely affected by the weather. I think the one at Cardiff Bay passed without any sailing at all. Notwithstanding this, everyone seemed to have a good time. At the OGA60 “main event”, at Levington there was, again, less small boat sailing than people had hoped for and the deluge that accompanied the parade of sail will be long remembered by those who experienced it. Again, the land-side activities at Levington went a long way towards making up for the limited sailing. It was not all gloom and doom, though and there were very successful small boat events held in many of the Areas (most of these have been, or will be, reported fully, elsewhere). Over the past couple of years our friends in the Solent Area have also tried, valiantly, to put on small boat events but these have not been well supported by visiting sailors. The Solent Area has a great track record in organising big boat events, so I cannot see any good reason for this. Please encourage your members to attend a future small boat event in those parts.

2023 has been a fairly quiet year for the Gaffling 4.1. A couple of people have contacted me about potential new builds, but none have yet started. It was good to see a line-up of Gafflings at Levington but, unfortunately, the first Gaffling Championship had to be cancelled because of the weather. The intention is for this to be rescheduled to take place in 2024.

We launched an OGA Small Boats WhatsApp group at the beginning of 2023 and I am pleased to say that it has quickly become a part of the way we do things within the small boat community. We already see it being used for lots of interesting chat about a wide range of boaty topics. I am looking forward to seeing it being used to launch some “pop-up” sailing events, too.

We have an OGA small boats piece in (nearly) every edition of Watercraft magazine. All sorts of things have been published in this slot over the years but by far the best in my opinion are the reports on real sailing events (e.g. see the Ullswater OGA 60 event in the Jan/Feb. issue). If the Areas are writing articles about their events for publication elsewhere, it requires very little additional work to put them into Watercraft as well. So, please let me have your event write-ups, if you can and, remember, it is usually the pictures that turn a good article into a great one.

I have always been aware that I have never had what I regard as a proper mandate for my role from the small boat community. In a recent email to them, I offered to stand down from my role if anyone else would like to take it on. Noone has expressed a desire to do this, so I can confirm I am happy to continue for a while longer. One thing that would help me would be for the Areas to confirm who their go-to person is for small boats that I can use to (i) help us plan the overall calendar of events to avoid, as far as possible, date conflicts and (ii) to help me interact more effectively with Area members. I currently use the Area secretaries for this, but please let me know if there is anyone else that I should be using.

At this time of the year, the Areas are still developing their sailing programmes for the season ahead, but it is already clear that many of the “old favourite” events for small boats will take place, again, in 2024. At the same time, there may be some new ones appearing and I know the NW Area is planning an event based at the Windermere Jetties Museum on 3rd and 4th August. We are also exploring the possibility of a small boats event at Weymouth/Portland.

David Bewick.

OGA Small Boats Secretary.