



'Severn Tidings'

Old Gaffers Association – Bristol Channel Area Spring 2019 Issue 35

President's Log

At last the days seem to be getting longer, though after the balmy late February, March seems to be returning us to winter once again. My boat is due to be lifted back into the water in a few days from now, and of course the forecast is windy and wet, so no change there! However, later this month our Commodore, Viv Head, will be returning to us from his winter migration to New Zealand, so clearly summer must be on its way!

In the Bristol Channel we are planning the usual range of OGA activities for 2018. The full area programme is included later in this edition of *Severn Tidings*, and is of course in the Bristol Channel Area pages of the OGA website. New for us this year will be a long weekend in August when OGA boats are invited to join the Bristol Channel Yachting Association (BCYA) Rally to the Bristol Floating Harbour. An OGA fleet will sail from Cardiff to Portishead, and join BCYA boats to cruise up the Avon to Bristol, returning after the weekend via Portishead to Cardiff. After a lapse of a few years, the BC Area has renewed its affiliation to the BCYA, so we can now participate in any of their events. If any member has suggestions for potential BC sailing activities in the future please pass them on to myself or David Botterill, so that we can develop our sailing programme and incorporate new ideas.

As usual, Dave Botterill and I attended the Annual General Meeting of the OGA in London in January. Important changes in personnel took place this year, with long-serving OGA Secretary Sue Lewis standing down, to be replaced by Colin Stroud of the East Coast Area, and Pat Dawson retiring as Boat Register Editor with Alison and Julian Cable taking over. Both Sue and Pat were thanked for

their sterling service to the Association. The usual venue for the OGA AGM over the past several years has been close to the Excel Exhibition Centre, where the London Boat Show provided an additional incentive to members to attend.



St Piran on a day cruise (photo Charlie Harris)

However, with the demise of the boat show, it was proposed by the SW Area that the 2020 meeting be held in Bristol, where the Harbour area provides a fascinating historic maritime context. This obviously provides an opportunity for many more of our BC Area members to attend an OGA AGM. If you are not familiar with the harbour area, there are many attractions over and above the AGM itself to make the journey well worthwhile.

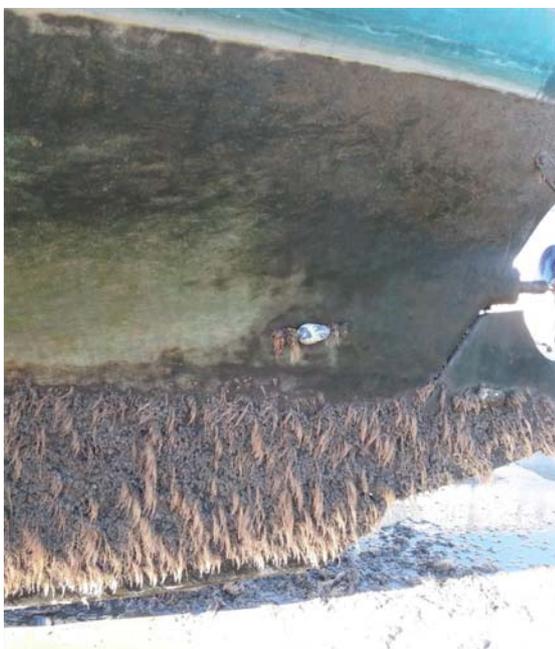
Finally, I would like to thank Dave Botterill our secretary, John Hutchinson our Treasurer, and Dee Holladay the editor of *Severn Tidings*, for all their work on our behalf over the past year. And here is a gentle reminder that Dee depends on you to send in articles and photographs for *Severn Tidings* so please keep them coming in; there will be another edition dropping through our letterboxes before too long!

Charlie Harris

Update from Working Yacht 1

All well in Lisbon after the short winter months. The boat has been on the hard since October to repair damage to the antifouling. This was self inflicted and could be a warning to all of us. I had been very happy last summer with the performance of the coppercoat in trying conditions here in the warm river water around Lisbon. I then decided to rest the boat in the mud near Montijo in order to inspect the hull and antifoul the propellor.

A few weeks later it was clear there was something amiss for I couldn't get more than 4 knots under engine. I couldn't find a convenient wall to lie against and so had to lift the boat. The picture shows the result and the clear demarcation line of the heavy fouling. It seems that the copper had reacted perhaps with sulphur in the mud and turned black and ineffective. First the barnacles and then everything else attached itself. So I have had to redo the affected areas but now back in the water everything seems fine. This time as an experiment I painted the propellor with coppercoat as well.



Heavy fouling on the hull of Working Boat 1

An important addition is a new anchor windlass and 100m of 12mm chain, attached to the 35kg spade anchor I bought last year. I have also had to renew the uv strip on the No1 jib.

Plans for this year are to visit my son in Barcelona and explore some of the Mediterranean harbours and anchorages.

John Laband

Restoring *Charlotte*



Original frames now largely replaced with new

When our Morecambe Bay Prawner *Charlotte* came to us in 2015, we anticipated scraping off paint, repairing any damaged planks or frames and a general interior refit. As readers of earlier reports will be aware however, removing the multiple layers of paint and tar revealed lots of rotten planks and frames, so in the event, our "restoration" has gradually turned into a rebuild. It now seems likely that the only surviving hull timber will be her wooden keel, and even that has required replacement of a short section in the stern! One year ago we had replaced around half the frames, starting from the bow and working back. At that stage we had exhausted our supply of oak (derived from a fallen tree kindly donated by Cardiff City Council), and progress slowed for several months.

Eventually, Devon timber merchant John Moody was able to source an excellent oak log, supplied to us as five cut planks with grain ideal for making the remaining frames. A further five frames have since been completed, leaving just two to be made before we tackle the much smaller sections within the counter stern. However, before that, the original sternpost had to be replaced, forcing us to think about sourcing at least a six foot length of

thicker, well seasoned straight-grained oak - in other words, a hefty lump of wood!

One working weekend, a casual visitor to the World of Boats seemed to take a particular interest in our ongoing project. One of our team attempted to bamboozle him with talk of futtocks, garboards and other ancient shipbuilding terminology, when he asked a rather penetrating question about wooden boat construction! Backtracking rapidly, it was ascertained that he had been a shipwright with the boat-building firm Chipperfields for some 30 years! The conversation thereafter took a different direction! Very happily, the gent was now associated with a canal restoration project just outside Cwmbran, and suggested that some oak offcuts from newly built lock gates might be made available to *Charlotte*. Half a dozen or so very substantial pieces of seasoned oak were subsequently kindly donated to our project, and stern-post and keel section are currently being made. After completing a total of 17 port and 17 starboard frames, the team's efficiency has by now improved, so we anticipate tackling the framing of the counter stern within a month or so.



Preparing larch planking

Of course the old boat (with her new timbers) remains a skeleton, and beam shelves and deck beams have yet to be made and fitted. However, thoughts have now turned to preparing wood for planking. We have a reserve of straight-grained larch available, so work has begun to bring the cut planks into the workshop to be passed through the

thicknesser, and already we have a small pile of long gleaming white timber, reminding us that the skeleton will eventually acquire a wooden skin, which means that at some time, hopefully not too far into the future, she may actually return to the water, and float!

Charlie Harris and Andrew Kelland

Random Reminiscences



I left school on my sixteenth birthday and with my life's savings (about £50) immediately bought a 15 ft sailing dinghy which I kept at Stourport-on-Severn. That summer, with my younger brother and a tent, we embarked on our first cruise.

We had to lower the mast (because I wrongly judged that it wouldn't go under Stourport Bridge) and under paddles came alongside *My Queen*, a houseboat kept by an old "sailor of the sail" who had rounded Cape Horn many times. Bronzed and barefoot, he took our warps and made us fast while we raised the mast and once more set our sails. I had accidentally put a turn in the head of the jib.

"Look aloft!" he said. "Oh, that'll be OK." I replied.

But he refused to cast us off, saying "There's nothing'll stand wringing and nothing'll stand snatching 'board any sailing ship".

I blushed. Down came the jib.

David Grainger

Would you like to buy half a boat?

'Would you like to buy half a boat' I asked my good (long suffering) friend Nick one Sunday lunchtime.

The timing was critical for two reasons. Firstly, because the ebay auction had only minutes to run and it was obvious that it was about to go above my budget. And secondly because I knew that Nick would be down the pub having consumed two pints of finest Thatchers cider.

Nick said "yes". I put the phone down and entered a higher bid in the dying seconds, and *Ellan* was ours. In my defence Nick had accompanied me to view her a week earlier, although at that point he had no idea he was going to end up owning half of her.

Ellan had first been pointed out to me as a potential project by a friend who I had first met on a boatbuilding course that we had both attended a few years earlier. It was during a wonderful 9 months at The Boatbuilding Academy in Lyme Regis that new friendships had been forged and a useful source of contacts and information built.



And so, I followed the link that my boatbuilder friend had sent me and it took me to the ebay auction pictures for *Ellan* (see above).

Ellan is a 13' long carvel construction mahogany tender. She has a Coventry Victor Midget MW2 engine which is a 4 stroke 340cc, 5hp, flat twin unit.



According to the lady selling her she had been sat in a shed for over 20 years. I must confess I was smitten as soon as I saw the pictures of *Ellan*. I should say at this point that I have always been an out and out sailing man. I have my own little sailing boat (Golant Ketch *Daydream*) over in Cardiff Bay and never for a moment thought that I would fall head over heels for a motor boat! But a few days later I found myself lying on my back on the gravel driveway of a pretty swish house in Weybridge poking around the hull of *Ellan*. My investigations can be summarised as:

- 1) Planking itself in good order (Some repairs required but overall sound)
- 2) Several timbers cracked
- 3) Full re-caulking required
- 4) Decks, beams and carlins rotten and needing to be replaced
- 5) She had an engine. I know nothing of engines!

I had seen enough to know that I wanted to bid on her.

A week later, and having won the auction, we drove back up with a large flat bed trailer (I certainly wasn't going to trust the road trailer that she was sat on), loaded her up and drove her home. On the way Nick asked the inevitable question. How long do you think it will take us to get her repaired, re-decked and back on the water? In my mind I thought that 6 months should do it, but sensibly I answered 'oh about a year'.

And so here we are two and a half years later and she is almost ready to embark on new adventures!

I am sad to say that we know very little of her background. When we bought her she had no name (*Ellan* is a combination of Nick's granddaughter's name and my grandson's). I have not discovered any maker's mark and our only clue to her age comes from the serial number on the engine, which tells us that she was built in the early 50s.

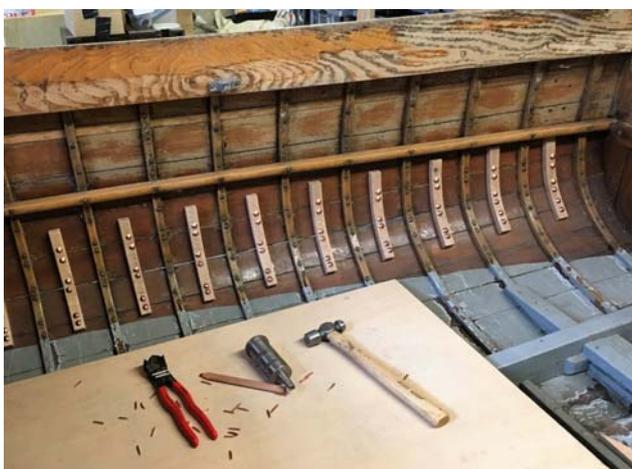
guests sat in the back. I have a wonderful vision of an impressive sailing yacht anchoring off some distant shore and lowering *Ellan* from her transom in order that the occupants could be ferried to port. Fanciful I know, but it's a lovely image.



Planking and Stem repairs required



Hull repaired re-caulked and finished



Short timbers inserted to strengthen planking around the existing broken timbers



New decks laid and coamings moulded.

Thames boatbuilder and restorer Colin Henwood made two important observations however. Firstly, that her carvel construction suggested that she was a cut above the more standard clinker construction for a working boat, and secondly that she has davit points. This leads us to the inevitable conclusion that she was a tender to something much larger and grander. This also probably explains the divided areas in the boat with the crew member sitting forward whilst the owner and

The new decks and coamings were made from South American Mahogany salvaged from the Bristol Bridge Inn in the 1980s

At this point in time *Ellan* is not quite completed. The engine needs to be re-installed (having undergone maintenance) and sole boards and aft thwarts need to be fitted. Following which she will be heading up the Taff, Ely, Bristol Avon, Thames

and possibly the Norfolk Broads in the Autumn. Nick and I will enjoy every moment!



Ellan in the water for the first time in over 20 years.

Keith McIlwain

Original Pilot Cutters to sail again in the Bristol Channel

With a fair wind, hard work and good fortune, the Bristol Channel could see two of its original sailing pilot cutters working the waters they were designed for. Admittedly not for their original purpose, but they will be able to educate people about the boats, how to sail them, and the trade for which they were built.

The two pilot cutters in question are *Frolic* and *Olga*. Two very different boats in two very different states of upkeep, but both boats regarded as historically significant by National Historic Ships. The *Olga* is already in the top 200 list, and when *Frolic* is back on British shores, she will be added.

To *Frolic* first, which has been in a state of ‘good intentions restoration’ for the best part of 30 years when she was moved up to Norway by a Danish classical musician. She has been moved three times, and now has had the land sold from under her on a jetty near Bergen.

Frolic was built in 1905 by J Westmacott of Cleave for Cardiff pilot Alf Edwards. She incorporated revolutionary features like a metal boom, and was built from a designer’s plans rather than half model and shipwright’s eye. She also is the winner of the first Cock of the Channel race in 1936.

The new owner wants his land free of an old boat, so *Frolic* was under threat of a chainsaw massacre on 31 January this year. Despite appeals in the press and by National Historic Ships (NHS) to save *Frolic*, there were no takers from potential owners with deep pockets and a soft spot for maritime history.

After talking to the old landlord, and *Frolic*’s owner, I managed to get a stay of execution until early May, to get a campaign together. The plan is to get *Frolic* back to Cardiff, for a very public restoration where Cardiff, South Wales and the Bristol Channel area will be involved in taking her through a 95% rebuild.

Public involvement, for support and educational purposes will be the key to *Frolic* becoming a flagship for Cardiff maritime heritage.



Bristol Channel Cutter Frolic

The caucus of a couple of old heads putting the plan together is pointing to hands-on history, that can illustrate what people had to do in terms of hauling sails, and disembarking cargo, but explained with scientific principles.

Frolic would then be a key attraction in Cardiff Bay, and able to undertake short trips into the Bristol Channel – weather permitting – as well as attend regattas and festivals as an ambassador of Cardiff, Wales and the Bristol Channel.

Hannah Cunliffe at NHS believes that *Frolic* is mostly original, and so the timbers removed in the restoration could be exhibited.

And so on to *Olga*, which is seaworthy, and according to its owner Swansea Museum is 90% towards getting an MCA coding for taking passengers, after some cosmetic maintenance issues are addressed.

Olga is 56ft length on Deck and was built in 1909 in Porthleven for a Newport pilot sailing out of Barry. She continued in pilotage until 1917, when she was sold and became a fishing boat, and then a yacht, before being rescued out of Essex by Swansea Museum.

Swansea Council, the paymaster for the museum, recently included in a public consultation document a question asking its citizens whether the historic ship collection – including *Olga* – should be kept by the museum, or run by an outside charitable trust. The feedback was what the council wanted to hear – give it to a trust.

The problem is they want to saddle any trust willing to take on *Olga* with the responsibility for the lightship, steam tug, and former Swansea motor pilot cutter.



Bristol Channel Cutter Olga @NHS

After a call out from Tall Ships Wales trust, several organisations have come forward, and will be putting proposals to Swansea Council, and we could see *Olga* sailing again, not only in Swansea Bay, but more extensively in the Bristol Channel.

In the meantime, if anyone feels that they can help in the *Frolic* rescue and in the restoration project after that, email frolic1905rescue@gmail.com and all help will be gratefully received.

Will Loram

Announcement.

As a result of your membership of the Bristol Channel area of the OGA you are now also members of the Bristol Channel Yachting Association. This is how the BCYA describes itself on its website:

<https://www.bcya.org.uk>

The Bristol Channel Yachting Association (BCYA) is made up of member clubs and affiliates that have a connection with sailing on the Bristol Channel. Membership is at top level, meaning organisation membership covers all club members and berth holders who are part of that organisation. The BCYA is the second largest yachting association in the UK after the RYA and is a recognised consultee for all regularity bodies on matters associated with The Bristol Channel. We will take up the case of member organisations on request.

The BCYA runs a number of events each year including the Welsh Coast Rally and the English Coast Rally. These are major events with significant on shore attractions for participating crews. Three key features set these events apart

1. No entry fee.
2. Free drinks reception
3. Discounted berthing.

The BCYA recognises the Bristol Channel Yachtsperson of The Year and the Bristol Channel Club of The Year with two spectacular trophies presented annually in an awards ceremony at the Welsh Coast Rally.

The BCYA produces an annual events calendar for the Bristol Channel to encourage wide participation

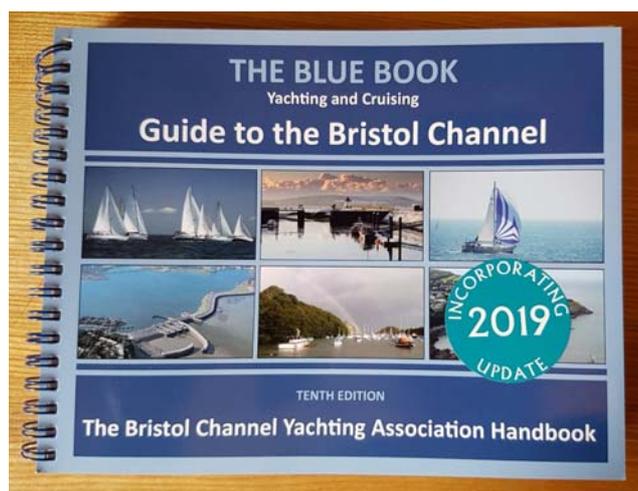
The BCYA publishes a yachting and cruising guide to the Bristol Channel *The Blue Book* incorporating

chartlets and information regarding various clubs, ports and marinas as well as contact details which are updated regularly.

The Blue Book at £5 plus postage is a particularly useful guide for those who like to venture away from their home ports. It consists of 120 + pages of detailed information about ports marinas and clubs up and down the Bristol Channel.

The list of events run by all the Channel Clubs is also a very handy reference for all that is happening throughout the year. The BCYA does host its own events as well. In 2019 they will take place in Milford Haven, Cardiff and Bristol Harbour. Hopefully some of us will find the opportunity to take part.

Please do take a look at the BCYA website for further information.



Bristol Channel Area OGA Events 2019

- **Gaffers' Night Informal Sailing, Cardiff Bay**
- **Cardiff Bay Race**
- **Day Cruises in Company from Cardiff Bay**
- **Clovelly Maritime Festival**
- **Bristol Harbour weekend**

Thursday Evenings, 4th April-26th September, Gaffer's Night Informal Sailing, Cardiff Bay

Thursday evenings through the summer are Gaffer's Nights in Cardiff Bay, now hosted and organised for the OGA fleet by the Gaffers Section of Cardiff Bay Yacht Club. Enjoy an informal sail followed by discussion in the Cardiff Bay Yacht Club bar. Those with a competitive bent may join the summer series of weekly self-timed races around the buoys.

Contact: Roger Wallington:

rogerwallington@yahoo.co.uk



Ludwen - Gaffers Night, Cardiff Bay

Thursday 6th June, OGA Cardiff Bay Race.

The race for the Cardiff Bay Cup is around a set course in Cardiff Bay. The race will take place at 18.00 and use OGA handicaps. After racing we will adjourn to the Cardiff Bay Yacht Club for a meal and a drink.

Charlie Harris; charlieandsueharris@hotmail.com

BC OGA Day Cruises in company from Cardiff Bay

The Cardiff Day Cruises in company are informal days for those wishing to lock out into the Channel from Cardiff Bay and enjoy a coastal cruise in company. Locking out is generally at 10.00 and we return around 16.00. Passages are made with the tide, and all cruises are weather dependent.

Down-Channel may take us around Flatholm and/or Steepholm, or along the Welsh coast to

Barry or Porthkerry and provides an opportunity for boats to enter the Commodores' Challenge (Penarth Pier, round the Merker Buoy to port and back between the islands).

Up channel will take us across towards Clevedon on the English side or past the Rhymney River to Newport where we can moor for lunch at Newport Uskmouth Sailing Club.

Contact: Charlie Harris:

charlieandsueharris@hotmail.com

Thursday 16th May: Down-Channel day cruise in company

Wednesday 26th June: Up Channel Cruise in company. Picnic at Newport Uskmouth Sailing Club.

Tuesday 16th July: Down-Channel day cruise in company

Friday 6th September: Up Channel Cruise in company.

Saturday and Sunday 3rd-4th August, Clovelly Maritime Festival and Lifeboat weekend, North Devon

Ashore there will be maritime themed activities and games for the whole family. On the water the Clovelly Cup Race will be held on Saturday, across the bay outside the harbour, organised by the North Devon Yacht Club. There is hard standing in the harbour for visiting craft. Clovelly is a drying harbour, but there are a number of moorings just outside the harbour, and boats that can take the ground may rest against the harbour wall.

For more details see

<https://www.clovelly.co.uk/clovelly-maritime-festival/>

Thursday August 8th – Monday August 12th Bristol Harbour weekend.

OGA boats will join the Bristol Channel Yachting Association English Coast Rally to the Bristol Floating Harbour. An OGA fleet will sail from Cardiff to Portishead on the 8th August, joining

BCYA boats to cruise up the Avon to Bristol on the 9th, returning to Portishead on the 11th and sailing back to Cardiff on the 12th August.

Contact: Keith McIlwain;

keith@daydreamboats.co.uk



Gaffers locking out at Cardiff Bay (photo Charlie Harris)



Arwen and Lapwing enjoying Cardiff OGA55 (photo Charlie Harris)

Fair Winds and Good Sailing to everyone!

Please send contributions for the next issue to:

dee.holladay@tiscali.co.uk