

## East Coast OGA AGM: 8 November 2025

### President's Report

Another sailing season's water has passed under our keels and thoughts are turning to 2026. Gaff rigged boats bring us together but it's the special group of people who sail them that make the OGA what it is both on the EC, nationally and internationally.

I want to draw attention to the **EC Gaffer volunteers** and an individual who all deserve a special mention and thanks.

The EC committee meet every month and are planning various events for 2026, but without the EC Committee there would be no events, so thank you to all the members of the committee for your hard work in 2025. As I said at last year's AGM you don't need to be on the committee to get involved organising and running events. Thank you to all the volunteers who have helped at all our events this year and a special thanks to the following volunteers.

John and Jodi Warren for organising the winter talk.

Evie Roberts who chaired the National AGM sub committee until last month and Marion Shirley who was also on this committee until last month.

You will all know champion and veteran event organiser Clare Thomas – now an Elder Gaffer and National Membership Secretary – congratulations to Clare. Clare has joined the AGM subcommittee which is being chaired by George Hutley – Younger Gaffer – Just!

The Gaffling Championship produced some memorable moments both on and off the water. Yvonne Mitchell always willing to go the extra mile for the gaffers and on this occasion and extra 100 miles to rescue the Gaffling double stacker on the side of the M6 deliver it to Ulswater and then bring it home again

Thank you to Mike Dixon – Race Officer at the Gaffling Championships and who has also put his name forward to be National Small Boat Secretary.

Thank you to Shona Fairchild who along with Martin and Julie Hills organised the wonderful Norfolk rally. Martin and Julie organised the Norfolk Wherry 'Albion' to be 'Mother Ship' for the weekend. I have always wanted to sail on a wherry.

Thanks to Yvonne and Rik Graham for catering at Slaughden.

Thank you to the summer cruise committee made up of mostly younger gaffers both EC Committee members and volunteers. The cruise just keeps getting better and we are all looking forward to the 2026 edition.

Please don't be shy we will always welcome more help and ideas for events and remember you don't need to be a member of the committee to get involved and organise an event or help with the running of an event.

I mentioned earlier thanks to an individual whose energy and enthusiasm for the EC OGA, Gafflings and the National OGA knows no bounds. With out this person I would certainly not have agreed to become EC President and been able to 'sail south until the butter melts' as EC President in absentia. Thank you, Pete and thankyou to the wonders of satellite communication.

#### Other matters

On the agenda you will see reference to the OGA legal status please get involved in the discussion on this very important subject and if you have any experience in organisations moving from '*unincorporated*' to '*incorporated*' please do make your self-known to Pete Elliston Area Secretary and Vice President or Colin Stroud National Secretary and EC member.

2025 also saw many discussions with our friends in the North East led by Pete Elliston which have culminated in them wishing to join with the East Coast making an enlarged 'super area' from Ramsgate to Bewick on Tweed. Francis Mogg NE Area President has agreed to become an EC VP to enable continuity and inclusion for our new EC members in the NE. We look forward to venturing north and welcoming NE Gaffers down south.

The East Coast Area Committee are always open to suggestions and ideas for events and how to continually improve the running of the area please do come forward. As our Dutch Gaffer friend Rik Jansen always says – The gaff rigged boats bring us together but it's the people who sail them that make the OGA what it is.

*Paul Masters, Area President*

## Secretary's Report

### Crossing the Bar

A moment to reflect for those who have crossed the bar, Mike 'Robbo' Robertson, Robert Hart - brother to Roy, and Geoffrey Osborn who back in 1998 was sailing a Heron dinghy in our early Swallow & Amazons events.

### New members

34 people joined since 19 February 2025. Total is currently 420 individual members. This includes 17 of the NE who have now been incorporated into the East Coast Area. Interestingly all our new members recently seem to join 'as a result of an event'. The Solent, for comparison has 331 members, making the two combined Areas well over 50% of total UK membership.

### Review of events 2025

The year started as they all do, in January.... with a wonderful talk in The Unitarian Meeting House in Ipswich by Cathy Shelbourne on Admiral Sir Phillip Broke and how he took on the 'USS Chesapeake'. We have planned another meeting in this most incredible building again in 2026. Thanks to Jodi and John Warren for organising these events.

Then (while Sarah and I were in Spain) there was the 'Grand Day out in London' in February at Trinity Buoy Wharf where the Trinity House Lighthouse crews were trained. This tour was led by Eric Reynolds who owns the two boatyards on the River Deben (Woodbridge and Waldringfield) and have in the past sponsored our Deben Event which will be run again in 2026.

32 Gaffer members travelled to Trinity Wharf before going on to a tour of the 'Cutty Sark' (the Ultimate Gaffer in my mind) run by one of our younger members Maddie Phillips, OGA born and bred. She is one of the 'Cutty Sark' Shipkeeping Technicians---- Maddie take a bow!!

The ECOGA Annual Dinner was held in West Mersea at the WMYC and, due probably to a presentation being made to Trevor Rawlinson for long service to the EC committee upon his retirement, it was a bit more formal than intended. A great venue and some great stories revisited by Trev and others!! The six Nations England v. Wales was on that day in the Club too: 68/14 to England!

The Easter Rally, originally intended to be based here at RHYC, sadly had to be cancelled as it seemed too early in the season to fill the numbers. In 2026, Easter is even earlier so there is no plan to organise an OGA event.

The end of May Bank holiday found us at the Stour Rally. 10 boats ranging from a Drascombe Coaster to a pair of 100 year old plus Essex Smacks attended this 'breakfast raid on Mistley Quay' where bacon rolls and coffees were passed through a hole in the fence making a water borne protest. Amazingly this time the Police were not called by the

owners so maybe the owners have been ticked off at calling them, lets hope so. The write up and report is on the Eastcoaster website as are all reports from our events, but this one was written by a brand-new member, Peter Smith from Manningtree. It is particularly good in recounting how we do things and welcome people. Thankyou, Peter.

June found the OGA gathered in St Malo, a 10 year anniversary of the last event. Around 60 boats attended from France, Belgium, England, Wales and the Netherlands. The EC trailer section took a pair of double stackers with four boats and made a show with a Gaffling, 'Dirty Girty' and sculling a Smack boat. 'Rely' made it there and back having started out on the early May Bank Holiday weekend from Walton, just 12 hours after the sails had been bent on, one day after she was launched. That just had to be the longest shakedown trip of many boats. 'Cygnet of London' also braved the somewhat stormy Channel to arrive in St Malo. The festival was rained on for what seemed like the whole time but we did get a sail in on the Saturday. We were presented with a new St Malo flag (the last one after 10 years has worn out) to fly at our events when at the Hut 31 on the Stour so look out for it!

Swallows and Amazons too place at the end of June. I think this was the 26th year in a row and again we had it as a three day event but, this time, from an idea from Pete Thomas, we had deep water moorings at Titchmarsh, thus transforming the event. We had 29 boats turn out with 51 people two of whom were under the age of nine and they wrote the report! If you haven't read it, please do, it is wonderful. One boat had just done the Golfe du Morbihan then St Malo and after a few days break joined us. Another came from the Lake District for a second year, and we had six new adult members join, plus the two under nine, as a result, and what a result! The future of the OGA is looking good around here.

The East Coast Race was early July. Once again, we were hosted with pleasure by the Stone Sailing Club with the boat crews and galley crews at our disposal. 21 boats entered and six DNS due to the weather. The course chosen by Ed Roberts was excellent and all the boats were easily seen from the race control tower. The new team in the Galley did an excellent job and the boat crews couldn't do enough for us. That hospitality made it all the worse when only two boat crews who were "in the prizes" attended the prize-giving. I did the presentations, and I was embarrassed at the lack of prize-winners to present to. The club officers noticed the situation and I apologised and discussed how we might deal with it for the future. One boat had more than 10 crew on board and could not find anyone to attend. I am not prepared to do another prizegiving like that again. I do hope we can work out a way to ring some changes with this thought: The fewer people that attend a prize giving, means that the bar/club does not get the beers and drinks sold, which means that they do not get the money which means that they might think it not worth doing again.

In 2026 we are planning to have the ECR at/from W Mersea so I really do hope for changes. Incidentally no prizes have been picked up from me since, as they are stored in our loft. Gripe over!!

31 boats entered the Summer Cruise in August: not all made it with 78 crews planned so around 60 something head count. Well, what a mega cruise it was from the glorious weather we had, to the locations we visited. All the clubs on the Ore and Alde with the café at Snape were raided by small boats and one paddle board, even if one flubber had to be towed all the way there. It was amazing, and all masterminded by our Younger member subcommittee (with some input and representation from/by Sarah)

We saw torrential rain momentarily when picking up moorings or anchoring near Aldeburgh, the internals of Pagodas, hot sun, great clubs and so many of those attending, had never been 'up the Alde'. Well done to all the organisers and those attending a really great event.

Mersea Regatta mid August. Unfortunately, only two OGA boats of our fleet attended which was a shame as they were racing for the regatta prizes and our Presidents Cup so this event was included in the point series so pay attention later on! Well done to the two boats that attended.

Gaffling 4.1 championships in, sorry on Ullswater but one boat did actually go 'in' This event was organised by Alasdair Simpson and his team from the NW area, so many thanks to them. All six boats attended with one tow car from the EC team being 'sent home on a breakdown lorry'. The weather was fantastic and worked in harmony with the stunning surroundings to make a spectacular event. Cruising the length of the lake in company was a great lead up to the heats and then the championship race, both of which were expertly run and overseen by Mike Dixon with Sarah as the official timekeeper and recorder. Many thanks to you both. The EC were first and second and if one boat had not transmogrified into being 'lake turtle' we would have been placed 1,2,3 .

Wherries, Windmills and Waterways event in September. Crikey! I need some more superlatives!! Shona, Martin and Julie with the team from the Norfolk Wherry Trust certainly know how to WOW! Paul mentioned them in his report, but I bet the locals are still talking about us all moored up to the wherry 'Albion' on a Broad for lunchtime that day. This event was created almost with a 'by the way let's go to the Broads'. A truly historical event. Many thanks NWT. This event just shows what can be achieved by members NOT actually on the committee!

So, in true ITN speak, "[And Finally] Reeuwijk Raid. Although run by the Dutch sailors near Gouda, this event was originally going to be attended by several EC trailer sailors but, due to the inclement weather the only ones attending were Sarah and me as we had been in Friesland the week before sailing a Crabber owned by our host. We took advantage of being there to carry out a recce for another trailer event based in Friesland - more of that later.

Do have a look at all the event reports on the Eastcoaster website/newsletter. There is so much to read during the winter months in the cabin amongst the refitting. Beverley is continually working on getting articles from others and setting it all out seemingly, in the early hours judging by her email send times!

### **Legal entity of the OGA**

Can I ask for a show of hands for those who have heard or read anything about this topic recently? The current situation and status:

The OGA is an unincorporated association in the eyes of the law, it cannot own property (boats and trophies) and its members and committee members can be seen to be liable for any frap ups and foul ups should they occur and prosecutions take place. On the face of just that, it's a bit grim. HOWEVER with the appropriate insurance cover and procedures, the liability can be almost reduced to zero as we would be seen to be acting in a reasonable manner. I say almost, as we all know what happens with insurance. AND I have been assured recently that we have sufficient insurance cover so as to be able to sleep at nights!

Following several months of investigations into the topic of legal entity, several options have come to the fore. It appears that one of two have been seen as the way forward.

1. 'Incorporate by guarantee' ie a limited company by guarantee limiting the company's liability to say £1. That company would be the new legal entity as opposed to any one or more members or officers as now. This company would have directors who would be protected as would be the officers, but it is just possible that they could, in very serious events still face prosecution. A concern about following this path is that the burden of

administration would increase as we would be under the rules and regulations of Companies House.

2. Remain unincorporated, but by following the RYA legal dept guidance: various areas such as constitution, rules, risk assessments and contracts can be rewritten, tightened, put in place and reviewed regularly so as to reduce risk and therefore liability. Fortunately for us on the EC we have been doing RAs for 10 years and this will become an OGA wide system/procedure whatever happens! All these would be combined with current insurance cover, regularly reviewed and checked so as they effectively give us the same protections.

To help the AC get to a point where they can decide which way to go, a number of members from the EC, Solent and SW areas with Georgina Tall as our in house legal adviser got together on Zoom and met on two occasions. We have been in discussions with the RYA legal dept this week and we have had a clear statement from their Kate Appleby which I want to share with you all.

### **RYA Legal Advice**

*This is a summary of a discussion with Kate Appleby of the RYA Legal Dept.*

*In short, her advice was to stay as we are as an un-incorporated association and to explore what we can do to mitigate members' risks before considering any form of incorporation. She agreed that incorporation would largely solve our concerns over liability but she was equally clear that we could easily find that we inherit a whole load of new problems with incorporation that would call into question the wisdom of doing so in the first place.*

*Her definitive advice was that we should first of all examine our current rules, constitution etc and see whether they are fit for purpose and have moved with the times. She mentioned risk assessments and whether (a) do we do any; (b) if so, are they comprehensive enough to cover the event in question; (c) do we have adequate insurance to cover ourselves; (d) if we undertake assessments, can we demonstrate that we have taken all reasonable measures to mitigate the risks identified; (e) do we have model contracts with our suppliers even if it is one side of A4. Put all that in place and she considered that we could do little more.*

*She belongs to a large sailing club that has premises, boats, runs events etc yet it is un-incorporated. In her opinion that is perfectly acceptable as they have revised their club rules, overhauled their Directors and Officers insurance and put in place a thorough risk assessment regime. Her only concern with any organisation such as as the OGA is one of personal injury. If the event or venue has been suitably risk assessed, indemnity clauses inserted where necessary when members are booking.....in other words all reasonable steps have been taken, then that would be perfectly adequate. If properly done, incorporation would have no added benefits.*

*She was absolutely clear, even to the point of being adamant, that the implications of being incorporated can incur a burden on the administration of the new organisation beyond what one might expect with little or no benefit. With this advice, a root and branch overhaul of our documentation plus a serious examination of our insurance will most likely be enough.*

*If we were to go down the incorporated route she suggests a company limited by guarantee. Needless to say, she thinks it is a lot of effort for little gain - best to redraft and add to what we have.*

*Grant Morris, Solent Gaffers Area Secretary*

*5 November 2025*

Following that group's meeting we shared this with Colin Stroud, he informed us that he has had the same assessment of the situation from Bristol Channel area. At the end of that meeting, there was a general feeling that we should follow the RYA advice supplemented by further discussions with the RYA which I will be doing with the Solent Sec, Grant Morris and the SW sec, David Patuck next week.

This is a very thorny subject and there have been many hours spent getting to this point over the past eight months. It is our hope that at end of the extraordinary AC meeting on 18 November, the AC shall have settled on a way forwards for the GMC to pursue.

Are there any thoughts on these two options please?

*Pete Elliston, Area Secretary*