

**OGA**  
**EASTCOAST GAFFERS**  
 BERWICK-ON-TWEED TO RAMSGATE

# EASTCOASTER

Newsletter of the East Coast OGA



2025 was a very active year up and down our coastline as well as in smaller boats on inland waterways. Our Area remains very active, with new Members joining almost every month. There's even some winter sailing in this issue (p.11). Now that our Area extends from Ramsgate to the border with Scotland we hope to feature boats from further up the coast in 2026. In this issue there are three featured boats: 'Harbinger' owned by our most southerly Members along with Norfolk Gypsy 'Dream Catcher' and 'Rædwald', a brand new boat launched in 2025. Following on from the successful Ullswater Rally in 2025, we have another Small Boat Rally organised for later in the Summer in the NE at Derwent Reservoir, Co. Durham.

Your EC Committee has prepared the draft 2026 Calendar, available to download for printing at home. However, please be sure to look out for updates online where booking and registration is already open for the earlier events. **Don't rely on details in this first draft for the whole year!**

Thankyou to everyone for your contributions, your Editor is always looking out for more tales to tell!

*Cover photo: Des sails through a rainbow in December by Liz Reynolds. Read the report on p.11*

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## Dates for the diary: 2026

Your Committee has been working hard on the 2026 Programme, available to download and print. Visit the Events page on the website for updated information and bookings:  
[www.oga.org.uk/areas/east\\_coast/east\\_coast\\_events.html](http://www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/east_coast_events.html)

### 8 February: Sunday Lunch

Walton & Frinton YC

### 21 March: EC Gaffers Bike Ride

Join us for a Spring spin along the heathland trails of Tunstall and Rendlesham forest.

### 23 - 25 May: River Deben Rally

We're returning to the River Deben for a small boat event hosted by Woodbridge & Waldringfield Boatyards. Larger boats will be welcome to join in the weekend events! There will be plenty of space for open boats, trailers, cars and campervans.

### 26 - 28 June: Swallows & Amazons

Walton & Frinton YC will be hosting our 'signature' event again this year over a long weekend.

### 18 July: EC Annual Race

Hosted by West Mersea YC, the EC Race will be on the River Blackwater with the Summer Cruise starting on Sunday.

### 19 - 25 July: East Coast Summer Cruise

We're awaiting final details but the Cruise will start at West Mersea following on from the EC Race. The draft plan is to cruise north, perhaps as far as Southwold.

### 28 - 31 August: Small Boat Rally, incorporating 3rd Gaffling Championships

This three-day event will be held on Derwent Reservoir, County Durham. Bring your small boat, join us to camp and crew with other Gaffers or hire a Gaffling for the weekend . . .

### 26 September - 2 October: EC Trailers on Tour

Pete (Area Secretary) and Sarah invite members to join them on a cruise in company to the Netherlands. More details and registration of interest form is available on the website.

### 7 November: EC Area AGM

Royal Harwich YC

## Your Committee needs you!

Would you like to help in organising events. This does NOT involve attending numerous Committee meetings . . . just ideas for great events up and down our new extended Area. Please contact any member of the Committee with your offers of help - we look forward to hearing from you!

*'Hyacinth' at the EC Race, 2025*  
 Photo: Seamus Masters

*Swallows & Amazons, 2025*  
 Photo: Steve Mitchell

*Deben Rally at 'the Rocks', 2024*  
 Photo: Dean Stepney







## Featured boats

*We bring three more very different 'featured boats' this quarter. In November we featured 'Harbinger', hailing from the most southerly part of our Area. December brought a Norfolk Gypsy, 'Dream Catcher' with January being probably the newest boat in the EC Gaffers fleet. Launched last summer, 'Rædwald' was designed and built by young Gaffer Sam Doman.*

*Please contact the Editor with ideas for more boats to feature in 2026.*

### 'Harbinger'

*Our featured boat for November is owned by our most southerly members, Edward & Charlotte, based in Dover. Edward pens a few words about the Manx Nobby 'Harbinger' and asks if anyone can shed light on some of her earlier history.*

Caring for Ruby the Border Collie made finding time for sailing rather difficult, so after 15 years custodianship of the gaff-rigged, J Francis Jones designed, Sole Bay motorsailer ketch 'Vega of Garth', it seemed a good idea to hang up the seaboots. Tom Colville bought 'Vega' immediately, and valiantly sailed her single-handed from Dover to her new home in beautiful west Scotland. It wasn't long for me before seller's remorse set in. It wouldn't hurt to have a look around I thought, and soon became interested in the gaff cutter rig, which offered a very pleasing appearance and better sailing performance. On auto pilot, I'd soon test-sailed 'Harbinger' and agreed to buy her from Mike Sullivan in Southampton. He had sailed her in many OGA events, including to Brest and Holland. I liked her character, lines, motion and ability to sail in very little wind compared to my previous motorsailer. I must have viewed this excellent video of her hundreds of times.

In October 2021 we sailed 'Harbinger' to her new home in Dover with an overnight stop at Eastbourne. On trying to leave the lock the engine wouldn't re-start, but we eventually traced that to a loose wire. I later discovered that getting the sails down can be quite dramatic if mishandled. There was quite a lot of mainly cosmetic work to be done, which has satisfyingly filled my retirement ever since.

'Harbinger' is a Manx Nobby fishing boat. She has their typical carvel construction of larch on oak, rounded stern and markedly angled stern post, and originally had a two-masted lug rig. She's 38 ft on the deck by 11 ft 6 in beam, 5 ft 6 in draught and displaces 13 tons with a lot of internal ballast. She was probably built before WW1, but the details of exactly when and where are unknown: if you know anything, please pass it on. She had a major refit on the south coast in the 1980s.

She was converted at some stage to gaff rig and an engine was fitted with the prop shaft offset a little to stbd. The stern kicks to port when going astern, so marina manoeuvring is best done with stbd turns. This worried me at first, but has turned out to be manageable, as she can turn all right in her own length.

The fish hold has been replaced by a fwd cabin and saloon with quarter berth. It's topped with a low coach roof that allows standing room for me in the saloon.

In January, Ruby the dog passed on at the same time as the project reached readiness to participate in the OGA East Coast cruise. Admiral Charlotte and previous owner Mike, who retains a strong attachment to the ship, came along. We had a wonderful time on a cruise that I probably wouldn't have attempted without the OGA organisation and encouragement. I still want another Border Collie though. Would it perhaps be possible to train one as a sea dog?

*'Harbinger' at Yarmouth Gaffers, 2021 (previous page)*  
*'Harbinger' approaching Southampton, c.2010 (right)*

Words: Edward Ferris

Photos: Keith Allso



## 'Dream Catcher'

*Our December featured boat is the Norfolk Gypsy 'Dream Catcher', owned since 1999 by East Coast OGA member Peter Smith who brings us the story of how he found and purchased her. Extracts from her log of a passage to Snape in May, 2025 are on p.10.*

In July, 1999 I was driving along the North Norfolk coast road with my wife Sharon during a camping holiday in Norfolk, and heading through Morston village, between Sheringham and Wells-next-the-Sea. Sharon unfortunately, has no affinity to boats or boating, so I really was utterly astonished when she said, "Oh look, there's a boat-yard." I instinctively turned the car into their driveway, and was met by three Norfolk Gypsies lined up on trailers in the adjacent field.

It was love at first sight, although way outside my budget. I spent the next 2 hours or so looking over the one that I was drawn to, whilst Sharon waited patiently in the car. That evening, whilst strolling along the coastal path, we were talking about the fact that I had spent so long looking over the boat. It seemed to me that it had only been about 20 minutes! For the second time in one day, I was astounded when Sharon said, "Well I guess buying that boat rather than keeping the money in the bank will make you a lot happier." I didn't need any further encouragement. A deal was struck the very next day!

Subject to a test sail, I had just bought boat no.1. The first boat out of the mould, designed by Andrew Wolstenholme, built by Charlie Ward at his then North Norfolk Boatbuilding site at Binham, and first launched in April 1990. Its first trip was to the Classic Boat Festival at Shotley Marina, Suffolk. The boat had been in Andrew's family since it was built, so had a fine provenance. She was trailered home and launched the following weekend. A truly impulse buy, but with zero regrets. 'Mona Elizabeth', as she had been christened was the only thing I felt I had to change to make her truly mine. Sharon's suggested name of 'Dream Catcher' would, I thought, bring her to love the boat as much as me, so living with the prospect of sailors' superstitions, her name was changed anyway.

**Forward 26 years ownership & 26 weeks member of the OGA: November 2025**







Just 7.28mtrs length overall, a beam of 2.31mtrs, and draught of just 0.51mtrs (with the centre plate up), she makes a perfect craft for creek crawling East Anglian waters and beyond. With a gunter gaff rig, tan sails, and a Yanmar 1GM10 inboard engine, she does everything in a seaworthy and well-mannered way, and also allows legitimate membership to the OGA. She has been built with great care and attention to detail. The hull, hand laid in glass-fibre over a very generous gel coat; and as no.1, was over engineered, with a gross weight of just over 2200kg against specification of 1500kg. A generous helping of teak timber throughout gives a more traditional appearance, and with bronze deck fittings by Davey & Co. London, Douglas fir mast by Colliers, and oak tiller and samson post.

She has a lovely turn of keel, giving a very stable feel, and a beautiful transom, making her look as good out of the water as in. The cockpit boasts a size, worthy of a boat at least twice her size. The main cabin has two full length bunks, twin spirit stove in a compact but well-designed galley, an ingenious swivel table, flushing toilet under the chart table, and shelves above. The draining wet locker includes a twin boot rack. Brass portholes and gimbaled brass oil lamps makes for a cosy convivial cabin.

I've found her to be somewhat wetter to sail in poor conditions, and since the wind, for me, invariably blows 'on the nose', I decided to buy a sprayhood. But nobody had built a sprayhood for a Gypsy, so no plans were available, and hence would cost an unjustifiable sum. Can't be that difficult, I thought, so I bought a couple of lengths of stainless tube, some fittings, and created a frame. A fabric template was then stretched over the frame and used to make the hood on our home sewing machine. It did struggle a bit at times, but successfully achieved the task, with very satisfying results. It has transformed those wet conditions that one experiences to sail in, being so close to the water. A folding table in the cockpit, easily able to seat 4 in comfort, completes the necessary facilities for fabulous 'al fresco' suppers whilst at anchor in sheltered bays or creeks. Sailing is the most awesome pastime, but 'enjoying' the boat makes time afloat, priceless!

Since owning her, the furthest north I've sailed is up to Lowestoft and through the southern section of the Norfolk Broads. The furthest south, is to the Thames and up to St. Catherine's dock at Tower Bridge. A tiny cruising ground to most readers, but no less enjoyable. Perhaps, now retired, and with children grown up and moved out, next season will be the time to spread MY wings?

*Words & photos: Peter Smith*



## 'Rædwald'

*Our featured boat for January 2026 is one to look out for as the year unfolds. She's 'Rædwald', a brand new modern dinghy designed and built in Suffolk by local young boatbuilder, Sam Doman.*

### What influenced the design for 'Rædwald'?

As a boatbuilder and sailor, I often found myself wondering what my ideal do-it-all boat would look like. With a background in high-performance sailing, passion for traditional boats and love for dinghy cruising; the ideal boat needed to be versatile, fast, beautiful, seaworthy and capable. As I refined the design in my head over the past few years, a clear hull shape developed. Essentially the boat is a fairly traditional 15'3" clinker dinghy above the water line, while the underwater shape is powerful and efficient with a fine entry and low drag lines. Wide, flat mid sections encourage planing, making the boat inherently stable. This form should also be very sea kindly, with a high bow and plenty of freeboard to keep you dry in a North Sea chop. To make the boat as versatile as possible, she has two mast steps and five rig configurations, suiting everything from singlehanded cruising to high-performance racing.

### How was 'Rædwald' built?

I have no background or training in boat design, but having sailed many and varied boats throughout my life, I've developed a pretty good feel for how different hull shapes move through water. I knew it was possible to make a boat that looked like a traditional clinker workboat, but was capable of performance on a par with any modern racing dinghy. Not knowing how to translate this into a two dimensional drawing, I made a series of scale models to refine the shape, before scaling up to a full-size half model, which I used to make the building frames from. The prototype hull is clinker, built in marine plywood, glued with epoxy and reinforced with carbon fibre and fibreglass. I decided to incorporate this juxtaposition of modern materials and traditional design into the aesthetic of the boat, leaving the sheer plank, transom and knees as exposed carbon fibre, contrasted against the oiled oak and sapele gunwales, thwarts and trims. As building a one-off boat is such a huge amount of work, I decided it was worth taking a series of moulds from the prototype hull. Future copies may be produced in GRP. The finished prototype weighs about 170kg, but I think we can get the production boats down to below 150kg, whilst maintaining a very robust and rigid cored-fibreglass hull construction.

### Aboard 'Rædwald'

The interior is carefully designed to maximise space in the ergonomic cockpit. She has a huge amount of built-in buoyancy, a completely self-draining design (even in the unlikely event of the boat being entirely swamped) and optional water ballast compartments. These add a total of 70kg either side of the centreboard case, making the boat virtually impossible to capsize (even if you're really trying!)



### What are the five rig options?

single balanced lugsail

lug yawl (ideally suited to dinghy camping)

'cruising gaff rig' with jib and asymmetric spinnaker

'catboat' style gaff rig, with only the mainsail stepped in the forward position

'high performance gaff rig' with trapeze, topsail and 300 sq ft masthead spinnaker.

The lug rig for the prototype is borrowed from another of my dinghies. It uses an old hollow wooden yacht spar as the unstayed mast and carbon windsurfer masts for the boom and yard. The gaff rig is entirely custom made in carbon fibre, keeping weight to a minimum, despite being significantly over-engineered for a boat of this size. Production boats will have similar carbon spars throughout. Sails on the prototype rigs are a bit of an assortment. We're working closely with East Coast Sailmakers, who will be providing all the sails and canvas-work for the production models. We've also teamed up with Allen Brothers and Kingfisher Yacht Ropes to provide all the rigging hardware and ropes for this boat and future production models.

### High performance gaff rig sea trials

Making the carbon spars for the high performance gaff rig was an interesting challenge and a great opportunity to learn new skills. My experience designing and manufacturing carbon components is limited. With a background in more traditional boatbuilding I've dabbled in making carbon foils and spars before. I particularly enjoyed making the gaff saddle which is very low-profile, to reduce aerodynamic drag. It weighs less than 300g. The bowsprit, made from three tapered carbon tubes which fit together perfectly, may be fitted/removed from the through-stem socket easily. It extends from 700mm to 1700mm when going downwind with the asymmetric spinnaker. This rig really gets her moving. She planes to windward and achieved a sustained 11 kts in just 15 kts of breeze with only two of the four sails set. To date, she's only been out a few times, in winds up to about 15kts, but everything works well. With her high performance gaff rig 'Rædwald' is perfectly balanced, predictable and the power is very manageable. We have lots more testing to do and she's not fully stretched her legs yet, but so far she's exceeding expectations in every sense.

### Sea trials with the lug rig

Launching the boat in summer 2025 with just the lug rig, she sailed exactly as I hoped. She's fast, responsive, easy to handle afloat and ashore. Perhaps most importantly, she's very easy to sail! Her first trip was from West Mersea to Woodbridge. 40 miles beating into North Sea chop and she handled it beautifully, averaging 4.5 kts with bursts of 7+ kts with the smallest rig in light and flukey winds. Further trials have proven her to be a very easy and safe boat to sail. My 88 year-old grandmother enjoyed the experience of planing at 10 kts in a 20 kts breeze without getting splashed! We've sailed her with four people on board with space for everyone to sit comfortably and move around safely with plenty of freeboard.

### What was your aim in designing 'Rædwald'?

The goal was for her to be able to achieve 15+ kts, which we are yet to do, but I think it's attainable. I believe this would make her the fastest gaff rig open boat ever built. Although, maybe there's one in Sydney Harbour?



Another benchmark was for her to be as sea kindly and capable as a Wayfarer (despite being nearly a foot shorter). In summer, 2026 the intention is to test this by attempting to break the record for sailing non-stop round Britain in an open boat. This record has always been held by a Wayfarer. The current record stands at just over 15 days, averaging 3.8 kts. I'm fairly confident that 'Rædwald' can beat this, given the right weather. Another record I'd like to attempt, using the lug rig, is the Guinness World Record for the greatest distance sailed in a single handed dinghy in 12 hours, currently held by a Laser dinghy.

*A major part of my motivation for designing and building this boat is to demonstrate to the greater sailing community that traditional rigs are still relevant. They can still out-sail modern boats, which have sacrificed all their charm in the pursuit of mass-produced performance.*

If you are interested in finding out more, or having a fibreglass boat built, please contact Sam via his website.

Words: Sam Doman

Photos: Tom Jennings

[www.modernclassicboats.com](http://www.modernclassicboats.com)





## EC Area AGM: 8 November 2025

The East Coast OGA held their Area AGM at the Royal Harwich Yacht Club on Saturday 8, November 2025. After gathering in the bar for a drink and chat, 34 members sat down for the meeting at 5.30pm, chaired by Pete Elliston, Area Secretary & Vice President. 15 members sent their apologies and four joined the meeting via Zoom. The minutes from last year were duly read and approved. There were no matters arising from the 2024 Minutes so the meeting continued with the President's and Secretary's reports. Pete Elliston delivered Paul Masters' report since Paul and Jo are currently sailing in the North Atlantic off the Portuguese coast.

The Secretary's Report included an explanation of the possible change in legal status of the OGA with two options being offered for discussion, which will be formally agreed and ratified at the Association AGM in January 2026. Treasurer, Yvonne Graham presented the annual accounts which were accepted by the meeting. Beverley presented a summary of the work undertaken over the year by the Communications & Event Management group, thanking members for contributing content and noting our increased visibility in the national Press, including Classic Boat and Watercraft magazines. Pete Thomas reported on the Handicap and Racing Committee's work, thanking members for updating their boat measurements noting this is good for both racing and keeping the OGA Boat Register up-to-date.

All the current Committee members had agreed to stand again en bloc and were duly voted in. Francis Mogg, President of the NE Area, now merged with the East Coast attended the meeting via Zoom. In recognition of the merger and to ensure continuity he was elected to the role of Honorary Area Vice-President of the East Coast.

Flowers were presented to Beverley for work on Communications. Sarah Adie was also presented with a bouquet for IT support to the Area Secretary/Vice President.

**Bateman's Tower Trophy** awarded to Yvonne Mitchell for 'going the extra mile' (or 99 miles).

**President's Cup** won by 'Martha II' (not present)

**Bermudan points series** won by 'Ostara' (not present)

**Tom Felgate Gaffer points series:**

Third 'Lahlloo' (present on Zoom)

Second 'Reverie' (Pete Elliston)

First 'Cygnet of London' (not present)

**Needham Trophy**, for gaffer over 100 'Transcur' (Pete Thomas)

Supper was served at 1930.

Grateful thanks are extended to all the staff at Royal Harwich Yacht Club, once again, for providing us with an excellent venue for the AGM as well as superb catering in the bar and dining room.

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## 'Mayflower' voyage to America: a talk at the Unitarian Meeting House

*Sunday afternoon 11 January, 2026 found 45 East Coast Gaffers and friends gather in the wooden box pews of the 1700 oak-framed Unitarian Meeting House, Ipswich. The assembled company heard Cathy Shelbourne, from Ipswich Maritime Trust, describe what we know about the Mayflower's voyage to America. John Warren brings this report.*

A military outpost was established in Roanoke, now North Carolina, by Sir Walter Raleigh in 1585, later evacuated in 1586. The following year a colony founded by John White disappeared without trace. The first permanent English settlement was at Jamestown in 1607, led by Bartholomew Gosnold from Otley Hall, Ipswich. Despite a mixed English settlement history, popular culture has adopted the Mayflower's voyage of 1620 as a key event in US history. Pilgrims fleeing religious persecution may have favoured support from the church and fitted with later political moves for independence.

Captain Christopher Jones was brought up in Harwich (his restored house is well worth a visit) and his wife came from the Alma Inn across the street. He moved his business to Rotherhithe, where a modern stone marks his grave opposite the Mayflower Public House. His three merchants ships were chartered to take the dissenters from Leiden and London via Southampton and Plymouth. He probably chose Cape Cod for the landing because of his previous experience fishing on the Grand Banks. With so many 'Mayflower' ships at that time, the origin of the ship is not known, though the yard may have been in Aldburgh, Ipswich or Harwich.

Thanks to Cathy and also Jodi Warren for organising and cooking some delightful cakes to go with the tea afterwards. Our thanks also go to the Unitarian Meeting House, Ipswich for hosting this event.

## Summer & winter sailing tales

We bring extracts from two sailing stories contributed to your Editor and published during the Autumn. Visit the Eastcoaster website to find the full reports with more photos. [www.eastcoastgaffers.org.uk](http://www.eastcoastgaffers.org.uk)

### A summer sail to Snape

To celebrate the winter solstice we published EC Gaffer, Peter Smith's log from his passage to Snape aboard 'Dream Catcher' earlier this summer.

#### Thursday 11 May 2025

Well, I guess it's just like any other holiday – no matter how long in the planning, or how well organised, one is always running around at the last minute. Today was no exception. Mike was due by noon, and I still had to check out some kit, fill up the outboard for the dinghy, and find a sleeping bag! Mike arrived at 1130, laid back, organised, and apparently looking forward to this trip, planned some 4 months earlier in the cold dark months of winter. Kit, clobber, food, gismos and all were stowed away on board by 1240, and 'Dream Catcher' slipped her mooring on this fine sunny afternoon, a gentle easterly blowing on the nose as we motored down the river Stour from Manningtree to Harwich Harbour.

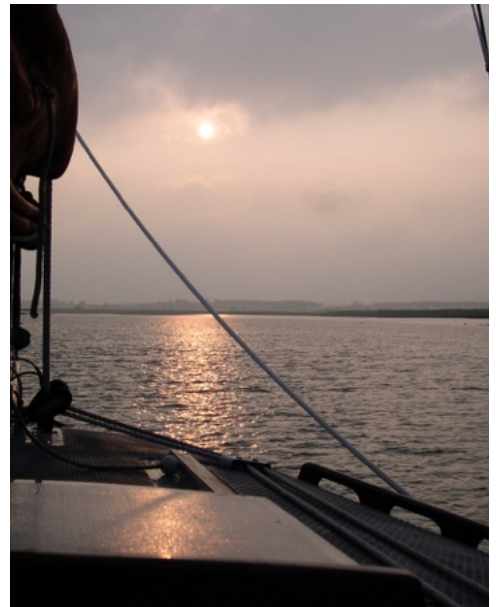
Ha'penny Quay, our first port of call at 1440, gave us a good excuse to sit in the sun on the pier's café to enjoy an excellent cup of coffee. We left the quay for another leg of the journey across the Harbour to lock in to Shotley Marina at 1710.

We settled down to a pleasant evening in the company of our respective wives Jackie and Sharon. We were as near to heaven as life in this world could be. Good food, wine, (or was it beer?), and a beautiful sunset preceding a full moon spoilt us still further. The only downside was the thought of locking out at 0545 the next morning in order to time the tide right for entry into the river Ore. Log: 10.9nm

#### Friday 12 May

We slipped the floating fenders of Shotley Lock and motored into the light mist of a dawn promising a beautiful morning. We were not to be disappointed. With sails set, we headed out of Harwich Harbour with a track set on the GPS to take us across the shipping lane at 'Deane' & 'Rolling Ground', and on through the black-flagged markers of lobster pots and sprightly little fishing boats working them in the glistening playground of this awesome East coast on a morning as perfect as one could wish for. We were cruising on past Felixstowe beach at 0705. The Deben had been set in the passage plan as a 'bolt hole' should conditions have deteriorated, but as events unfolded, the weather remained our friend as we passed Woodbridge Haven SW buoy at 0800.

Orford Haven came into view as we slipped past the Martello tower, just south of the mark at 0900. We followed closely the chartlet of Orford entrance with a clear 3.5 mtrs depth between Oxley and Weir buoys, and a minimum of 2.7 mtrs along the landward side of the river as we moved up to North Weir point. From there, a move over to the seaward side of the river, and we were safely in the Ore. An hour and a quarter later, having travelled on up the most unwelcoming stretch of the river, with barely a landmark save a few fishermen's sheds, we arrived at Orford. A pretty village with an active quay seeming more beautiful highlighted against the flat featureless surrounding





landscape, and now basking in the mid morning sunshine. At 1100 we passed the transit of the 5 huge radio masts that dominate the northern end of Orford Ness, and entered the Alde. Another 3nm further and we picked up a mooring abreast Aldeburgh Yacht Club at 1140. Log: 33.2nm

### Saturday 13 May

Wakened by the sound of rain on canvas we were slow to stir, and reluctant to decide positively when to leave for Snape. The rain cleared just before 1000, and with the promise of at least a drier spell, cast off the mooring at 1050 for the upper reaches of the Alde. Wow! What an amazing experience, following withies for just over 5½nm up a river, in places just on a mile wide, but with withies sometimes barely wide enough apart to pass between, the gut way snakes back and forth across this flat landscape, creating a remarkable challenge to anyone foolish enough to take it on. The reward is a most attractive destination at Snape Maltings Bridge. Coming alongside the quay at 1200, 'Dream Catcher' waited whilst we took tea and scones in brilliant warm sunshine at the teashop and had a mosey around the tourist gift shops. It felt so different to have arrived by boat rather than car, so often experienced in the past.

*Words and photos: Peter Smith*

## A winter sail: rainbows and seals

*Liz Reynolds brings us a few words and pictures from her mid-winter sail with Des Trollip from Titchmarsh Marina to Stone Point and back.*

On the day before New Years Eve, I woke up and reached out to see the time on my phone. There were WhatsApp messages on the OGA group chat. I noticed Des had offered the opportunity to go for a sail. I missed being on the water over the winter. I noticed Des had said he was setting off at 11am. It was now 10am and it would take me an hour to get there. I messaged Des to ask if I could sail with him. He agreed and said he would wait for me.

Des met me at the marina; his boat 'Gilda' was all ready to go, the sun was shining and the sky clear. My eyes widened at the sight of her. Des had restored her beautifully and she was a sight to behold. As I stepped aboard all my troubles dissolved. We cast off. We were leaving 40 minutes later than intended making the shallow river challenging. Des hiked on the main halyard and we set sail towards Stone Point. The barges that had been sunk to act as a sea defence sat above us on the bank as we meandered through the shallow water. The breeze was icy but the sun felt warm on the skin. Lottie, wrapped up in her coat and blanket, sniffed the air. We turned the corner and approached a floating vessel on anchor.

We tacked round back towards Stone Point and Des suggested we stop for lunch and a walk. At this point big black eyes and a slinky black head appeared out of the water, a slash of a flipper and it was gone, only for the seal to pop up again and take another look at us. I have a fond affiliation with seals, thinking of them as a kind of marine guardian angel.

I had always wanted to stop at Stone Point and walk on the sand and Lottie would be happy to run around. Des gently beached 'Gilda' on the sandy bank and put the kettle on.



This was reminiscent of sailing on the Norfolk Broads where I would often glide into the reeds to hold my boat steady and lower my mast before going under low bridges. Des kindly offered me a hot drink some of his home made bread and to share his lunch. I offered him the honey and mustard ham bought for Lottie! On Stone Point the views were stunning and from a certain angle could be mistaken for some beautiful Mediterranean island. Looking out to sea we could see the jumping of the water as the waves separated, revealing the normally hidden sandbanks. Des said we could almost walk to Harwich.

We used the tender to get back onboard and Des took up the anchor, 'Gilda' gracefully slipped back into the water and turned to face home. We set sail. Grey and white clouds began to billow out behind us and the wind picked up. I enjoyed setting the sails to goose wing. "There's a rainbow", Des said. I turned to see a Turner-style sky and bright rainbow colours appearing below. "It was meant to be," I said. What more could I have asked for?

Beautiful views, nature, sailing, friendship, kindness and generosity; thank you Des and 'Gilda' for making my Christmas and New Year a memorable one.

*Words and photos: Elizabeth Reynolds*

*'Papa Stour' on the Norfolk Broads, 2025  
by Marion Shirley*

*'Badger' on the Norfolk Broads, 2025 by  
Des Trollip*



## Website, Social Media, Print & email

### The choice is yours!

Every registered EC OGA Member who has provided us with an email address receives a regular mailing with updates and links to new content online. Please note that both Family members may submit their email address. News is published on the Eastcoaster website: [www.eastcoastgaffers.org.uk](http://www.eastcoastgaffers.org.uk)

The EC Gaffers Facebook page is updated regularly and there are WhatsApp groups for social 'chat' and events. Events information and booking forms are on the main OGA website: [www.oga.org.uk/areas/east\\_coast/east\\_coast\\_events.html](http://www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/east_coast_events.html)

The Association website provides access to 'East Coast Gaffers Online': Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp and EASTCOASTER. All Newsletters from 1994 may be downloaded to print at home. [www.oga.org.uk/areas/east\\_coast/east\\_coast\\_online.html](http://www.oga.org.uk/areas/east_coast/east_coast_online.html)

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For £6 per annum, East Coast Members may also opt in to having a printed copy of EASTCOASTER mailed to them on a quarterly basis. Send your cheque and request for this service to: Sarah Adie, Arpajon, 25a Harwich Road, Mistley, CO11 1ND

If you and/or another family Member in your household has an email address and would like to receive the monthly mailings, or you have changed your email address, please contact Colin Stroud, Association Secretary to confirm your details.

Contact Colin by email: [secretary@oga.org.uk](mailto:secretary@oga.org.uk)