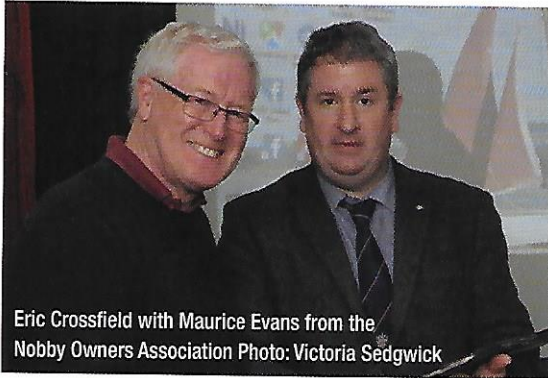




Crossfields of Arnside:



Eric Crossfield with Maurice Evans from the Nobby Owners Association Photo: Victoria Sedgwick

About 70 delegates gathered in Arnside on 16 March, 2019 for the inaugural Arnside Conference, organised by Alasdair Simpson, NW Area. Amongst the delegates were several members of the Crossfield family and Eric Crossfield brings us this report. The event was a resounding success, so join us next year and put the date in your diary now: 21 March, 2020.

Unexpected things happen when you gather together people with a shared and passionate interest in boats, old boats, beautiful boats.

Regular readers of 'Gaffers Log' may be familiar with yachts and with Nobbies or Morecambe Bay Prawners built by many builders in the north west area with Crossfields of Arnside being the most prolific boatbuilder in the area for the 100 years from about 1840 to 1940.

Place

At the top end of Morecambe Bay in an 'Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' lies Arnside on the estuary of the River Kent. The good people of this remarkably pretty village have taken the maritime heritage of Crossfields of Arnside to their hearts. As a Crossfield myself, grandson and great nephew of the last two boatbuilders, my heart swelled with pride when I heard there was to be a conference on the subject.

And so it was that on 16 March, 2019 as the tail end of storm Gareth whipped up choppy waters in the shallows of Morecambe Bay, 70 people came from far and wide to gather in the Arnside Educational Institute to learn and to share their interest in boatbuilders Crossfields of Arnside.

People and Boats

With 70 people attending, the large room was full. The audience was welcomed, and the conference formally launched by Andy Smith of the Arnside Sailing Club (ASC). Alasdair Simpson, Sailing Secretary of ASC, took the first leg by giving a comprehensive outline of Crossfields boatbuilders, their boatyards and much of their history.

Later that day Beverley Yates (OGA Editor) awarded Alasdair with the OGA 'Tales of Sail' trophy and deservedly so, as it had been Alasdair



'Severn' in her shed at Arnside



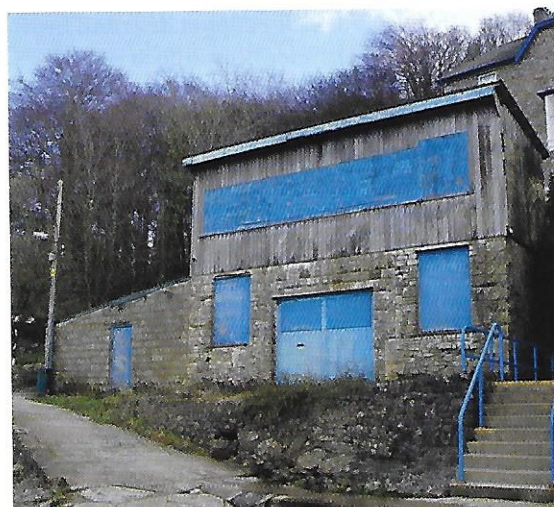
the place, the people and the boats

who committed his sustained energy, enthusiasm, persistence and extraordinary knowledge to pull it all together to make the conference such a success.

Keith Watson gave a delightful talk about his boat 'Maryll' (launched 1938) and he spoke about feeling more like a custodian than an owner. 'Maryll' is proudly owned and cared for by Keith in Holland, is a winner of a European award and has sailed the North Sea and the Baltic.

A full 131 years after launch in 1888 the graceful Victorian yawl 'Bonita', the first yacht built by Crossfields, was described in fascinating detail by owner Mike Beckett. 'Bonita' has been lovingly owned by the Beckett family since as far back as 1937. In 2013 she circumnavigated Britain and ventured a Baltic cruise in 2016. Search 'bonitayawl' to discover much more.

Sabina Sorrentino Tassinari (below) described in elegant and poetic terms the life of 'Moya' (1910), of her extraordinary history. 'Moya' having come 2nd in class in the 1975 Fastnet, restored in Trieste in 1993, winning the Martini Rossi award and now based in Greece. It was Piero, Sabina's late husband who was such a very diligent owner of



'Moya'. The relationship between boat and man has been recorded with passion, style and flair in an exceptional Italian documentary which was played to the conference and in the book 'il segno dell onda'.

'Severn' (1912), one of ten Rivers Class yachts commissioned by the Royal Mersey Yacht Club was bought by ASC with help of a Heritage Lottery Grant. On my visit, I discovered Arnside people have taken 'Severn' to their hearts and adopted her arrival in Arnside as a contemporary reflection of Arnside's



Photo: Victoria Sedgwick

Crossfields of Arnside

maritime heritage. Alasdair Simpson described her history, arrival and plans for her future in Arnside.

There is also an Arthur Ransome Connection. Mary Hamilton of the Arnside Archive Group described how Crossfields built boats for Arthur Ransome, not only 'Swallow' (& Amazons) but also 'Cochy-bonddhu' which has been restored beautifully by John Hodson and is now a splendid exhibit in the Windermere Jetty Museum.

As each presentation was given I, my son, my nephew and all family members attending were appreciating a much broader understanding of our family history.

A fascinating talk by Maurice Evans, representing six generations of local fishing family history, described an unparalleled depth and breadth of knowledge of Crossfield boats from a customer point of view. This presentation helped me to understand the significance of the work done by my ancestors. Through their craftsmanship and understanding of seamanship they enabled men to earn money as competitive fishermen, to provide for their families. They provided boats for what we now call the leisure industry, for simple provision of fun, excitement and ultimately happiness to ordinary folk visiting the coast in this beautiful region.

Boatbuilders

I've often wondered why they were so successful and built boats that have been enjoyed, worked hard and benefited thousands of seafarers. The conference has given me clues to this conundrum and I sense it was simply that they were 'of the place'. It's not that they were boatbuilders that happened to live in the area; it's more that those Crossfields were true locals of the area and they turned their natural craftsmanship to become boatbuilders. So it was that they knew their wider home area so thoroughly and instinctively that they understood the specific yet ever changing requirements of local, working, fishing and sailing families and the business evolved organically to meet their customers' changing needs over the roughly 100 years they were in continuous business.

The different perspectives of each conference speaker built upon one another to generate a

rich, multi-dimensional view of what otherwise could dissolve into an historical archive of photos, documents, tools and fading stories of the Crossfield boatbuilders. But it is hoped that the awakening interest in Heritage generally can give hope to potential for at least this particular focus to grow and to thrive in some sustainable form. As family, my relatives and I have been humbled to learn that interest in the boats and the history of the boatbuilders persists and appears to be strengthening as the years unfold. Let us hope that with care and attention Crossfield boats and many other well-loved vessels will live on to provide fulfilment for many more to enjoy.

This event gives me the happy opportunity to recommend to OGA members who share any common interest, whether it is boats, boatbuilders, loved location or any common interest to reach out to bring people together, to share and to learn. It need not be a fancy affair; the bonds that bring people together will be the boats or the location or special interest.

Fair winds, friends.

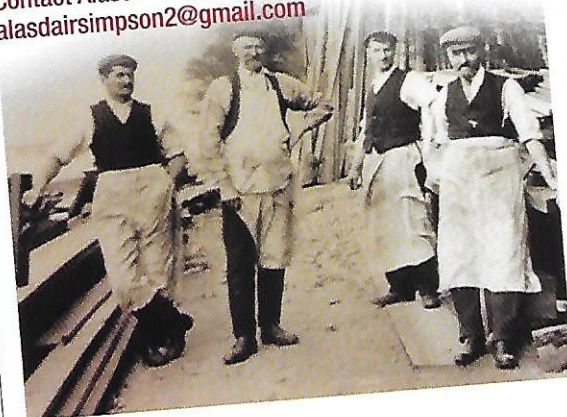
Eric Crossfield, Solent Area

Put the date in your diary for next year!

**2nd Crossfields Conference
Arnside
Saturday, 21 March 2020**

Themes may include 'Sir William Priestley' and her replicas and Restoration Projects.

**Contact Alasdair Simpson:
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'Ziska': from Arnside to Alaska!

As we go to press, your Editor has been tracking 'Ziska', a 116 year old yacht built by Crossfields of Arnside in 1903. She's just completed the Race to Alaska (R2AK), 2019 (below right). The rules are no motor, no support, 750 cold water miles of the Canadian Inner Passage from Port Townsend, Washington, to Ketchikan, Alaska. Designed to showcase the latest technology for human and wind powered boats, R2AK attracts entries from a wide range of craft, from modern foiling trimarans, finishing in just over four days, to a two-man rowing boat, 'Backwards AF', still racing at 4 knots with 21 miles to go. 'Ziska' crossed the line after 16 days, reported in a post on Facebook (below left).

'Ziska' survived early gales unharmed, whilst many of her modern competitors suffered damage. Race Boss Daniel Evans said, "It has been great to see 'Ziska' sailing better than most people thought she would. For something weighing over 12.5 tonnes. She has performed really well."

'Ziska' was built in Arnside in 1903 in Crossfield Brothers' Boatyard on Church Hill. Little did anyone know all those years ago that 'Ziska' would one day take part in the gruelling Race to Alaska on the other side of the world. She spent most of her early life in the Irish Sea, being registered in Dublin.



Bought by a 19-year old in 1997, 'Ziska' was sailed across the Atlantic to the Caribbean. In 2006 she was transported across America by road to Port Townsend on the West Coast. In 2017 'Ziska' was purchased by shipwright Stanford Siver who has spent the last two years restoring the boat before entering her in the R2AK. Find videos, charts, photos and reports on the website and Facebook:

www.r2ak.com/2019-daily-updates/

www.facebook.com/racetoalaska/

Day 16 Race report from Ketchikan

You might have noticed a certain smell in the air this morning; plumes of smoke wafted skyward as luddites worldwide lit their whale oil and coal-fueled boilers to build up enough pressure in their internet machines so they could tune in to see their standard bearer, Team Ziska, finish their marathon run whose latest starting line was 16 days to the stern. From the race to rebuild, to seemingly spending 18 of their 16 days upwind in light air in Hecate Strait, Team Ziska's race is impressive stuff. In keeping with their pace and nature, their story will be told after the telegraph dit-dahs the info to the home office and we can line up typeset and start cranking this story out by hand. We're sharpening our quills and twirling our mustaches in anticipation.

