The Association is a worldwide club of owners of sailing and motor craft designed by the New York naval architects, Sparkman & Stephens Inc. It was formed in England at the Cowes Classics Rally of 1993 by four devoted owners of S&S designed cruiser-racers, but it quickly expanded to encompass owners of sailing craft of S&S design in many countries.

The members share a love for the fast, sea-worthy and beautiful yachts created by Sparkman & Stephens. The S&S Association benefits greatly from a very strong relationship with Sparkman & Stephens Inc. in New York who actively encourage and support our activities.
Once again we enjoyed a lovely S&S Association AGM event.

This year (2010) the meeting was held in Barcelona under a bright, sunny sky and right in front of the old city. The perfect venue was the “Real Club Nautico de Barcelona” - the home club of Juan Carlos, the king of Spain, himself an enthusiastic competition sailor.
A bit about the club: it has a full length open veranda facing towards the boats and the city with a wonderful view of the iconic statue of Columbus prominently on the foreground. It provides service from seven in the morning until after midnight and the personnel are busy tidying up and serving tasty food and necessary (!) drinks to the assembled members. Even on a Sunday there are several people in the office for assistance. And not only do you find people with their laptops in comfortable easy chairs preparing for the regattas, but also “old” members having a nap in a quiet corners (and some not so old S&S Association members).

The lavish drinks and the superb food helped the fifty-odd Association members get into party mode. As usual, it was like a family reunion: you see a lot of the same faces and soon you pick up the conversation about the boating and then about life since we last met. But this year too, we saw also several new faces – both new to the AGM and new to the Association. At first glance the timing of the meeting seemed disastrous, with lots of members apologising for not being able to come. It seemed that the date chosen was too close to the holidays for many and for others it conflicted with the “racing scene”. For example: several Spanish S&S boats were competing around Mallorca since it turned out to be “San Juan”, a bank holiday for most Spaniards. It certainly gave the organisers a headache before the start, but as the event kicked off it became apparent, that for those of use who could make it, a fun, lively and memorable AGM was on the cards.
So what did we get up to? Well after a welcome reception we moved into the old town for tapas. After that many stayed outside in the little square enjoying the lovely temperatures so late at night.
The following morning the scheduled city tour was somewhat delayed. Due to a strike of air traffic personnel in France flights were delayed or cancelled, Bart and Akke Draaijer – demonstrating true S&S commitment – decided to travel down by car. They arrived late Friday night and as if that were not enough, they were robbed after parking their car near the hotel. And they weren't the only ones to fall foul of slippery fingers. Kerry Costello was also robbed (of her purse) on Thursday evening walking down the Ramblas. But these were the only downs in an otherwise glorious weekend...honest. So back to those tours. These gave the members some insight in the beautiful architecture of the city: both the beauty of Gaudi and also a view of the modern architecture prevalent in Barcelona. For the lunch we gathered in restaurant Ample in one of the typical small streets of the old town. I think there was “ample” food and drinks for everybody. A short “siesta” for most or indulgence in yet more sangria for others was followed by the Gala dinner at the Club. It is always good to see the ladies so dressed up and the guys so smart in their DJs - it gives an extra flavour to things!
And that dinner! Well, it was quite a long welcome drink (read welcome several drinks) period wasn’t it? One or two of our less accomplished imbibers did suffer a little with the very generous servings of cava, beer and wine. And then followed a very tasteful dinner: consisting of a perfect “shellfish soup”, followed by a course of baked sea bass “lubina al horno” and then by a “filette a la parilla”; everything was deeeelicious! And of course a morsel of sweetness to finish it off. The toasting to open the AGM, a toast to Olin and of course to the king of Spain, intersected the courses and we were offered a very informative after dinner speech on S&S in general, S&S in Spain and S&S in this club, by our very enthusiastic guest speaker: Leonardo García de Vincentiis. After the meal we went to the veranda for coffee and the band started again some music. It didn’t take long before a few people entered the dancing floor. After the midnight bell we toasted Justin Olley, who became 40 years old – hip, hip, hoorah!!!
The next morning the crowd gathered for the official part of the AGM event. The formal meeting. We gathered in the library between the books of the club and the picture of Juan Carlos. It was an especially productive meeting, and we finished only twenty minutes behind schedule – and that can be put down to our starting late. The meeting surprisingly turned up two possibilities for the AGM venue in 2012 – each on opposite sides of the US. Watch this space for an update on where it will be!! The date for the 2011 AGM in Falmouth is set for 20-22 of May and the organisation of the event is taking shape.

The Yearbook, produced so well by Bruno for the past two years, is going across the Channel to Holland. A small group of eager volunteers have already offered their assistance and I am certainly looking forward to working with them.

So, all in all a very enjoyable AGM - thanks to everyone involved in organising it, all who so whole-heartedly participated in it and, of course, to the generous hospitality of the Real Club Nautico de Barcelona!

Rob

A special thank you to Wilma Luigjes, who provided most of the photos. However, what you see here is only a subset of the complete series. If you would like to see all photos click here, but remember the photos are solely for the private use of S&S Association members (copyright Wilma Luigjes)