In recent years at successive AGMs, at the part where we start to think about the following year’s venue, Norway has been muted as a possibility and then discounted as being too expensive. At the 2017 AGM, much to attendees’ surprise this time Aud Ausland and Jon-Martin Faale presented an idea. They had found a venue where they thought it would be doable: an island called Bragdøya, close to Kristiansand where the accommodation would be rustic, camping was an option, and it would be very informal – a dinner but not a black-tie dinner. Everyone’s curiosity aroused, it was agreed – the 2018 AGM to be held in Norway. Some of us immediately started to plan a road trip. Some even decided to go for the camping option. The detail about leaving cars on the mainland and travelling to the island by a small ferry would be no deterrent to bringing camping gear.

The plans started to unfold. Our intrepid Chair and Vice Chairmen went on a reco to support Aud and Jon-Martin and reported that we should expect beautiful scenery and a relaxed atmosphere. Meanwhile six of us from the UK started planning our AGM adventure. It was going to be a drive through North West Europe, catching a fast catamaran from Denmark to Kristiansand. Mike and I decided we had better buy a lighter tent since our old steel pole and canvas frame tent might be a challenge to transport via the small Bragdøya ferry.

As the end of May approached I added Kristiansand to my weather app, hoping I wasn’t going to see a rain symbol. To my delight I started to see a sun symbol.
Friday

The drive through Europe was interesting and fun… a boozy picnic dinner in Belgium, seemingly endless roadworks in Germany, and a hotel in Denmark badly in need of a lesson in customer service. We had a lovely smooth crossing from Hirtshals in north Denmark to Kristiansand, cruising at 37 knots. Arriving in Kristiansand to catch the little Bragdøya ferry in beautiful weather (the app was right), we met old friends and it immediately felt like the party had begun. Luckily the ferry was quite roomy – there was a vast amount of luggage – tents, rucksacks, trophies, a table, chairs, S&S regalia, suitcases and three coolboxes! As promised it was just a 10 minute ride over to Bragdøya, and as promised it is a beautiful island.
Six S&S boats had arrived – Sasha and Jos of Hamble (Germany), Wervind & Heslia (Netherlands), Valona & Ian XIV (Norway). Very fine they looked too in the small harbour. Other friends had arrived earlier (some early enough for a romantic row around the island), there were a lot of hands available to unload the ferry and the wonderful island volunteers came to help with tractor and trailer to transport luggage to the various accommodation sites. We campers purloined a couple of wheel barrows to transport our tents to our campsite over a little rise from the harbour.
Friday night saw us gathering at the main building – the shed where mackerel was originally processed, now a museum-come-canteen – for the reception and dinner. Baked cod and salmon with veg and potatoes, followed by crème caramel. The staff on the island were catering for us and something told me we'd enjoy the food. Off to bed in our new tent for a peaceful night.
**Saturday morning**

The following morning dawned (early, it was Norway at the end of May) with blue skies and sunshine (the app was still right) and an al fresco breakfast – eggs, ham, cheese, yoghurt, muesli, freshly baked bread, homemade jam, juice, tea, coffee – no way were we going hungry.

The first item on the itinerary was a tour of the island by the lovely Claus, including Bragdøya’s history. A former mackerel processing site, the whole island is a public recreation area bought by Kristiansand council for the use of its residents in the late 60’s. It is run entirely by volunteers providing a workshop, use of a number of boats – mainly wooden, a harbour, accommodation, kindergarten, café, and space for events such as our weekend and weddings. After the introduction of a kitchen to provide catering for members and the events, the community started to earn money which now funds the upkeep of the boats and buildings on the island plus enterprises such as an ex-ice breaker for trips around the archipelago. Claus showed us the wonderful workshop (the envy of many). Gerhart’s Villa where 10 of the attendees were staying, the ancient breed of sheep with bells around their necks who are employed to keep the vegetation at bay (more of them later) and some of the more basic accommodation. Bragdøya really is beautiful.
Saturday Afternoon
Following the tour, we boarded the ex-ice breaker for a trip around the archipelago. Amazing houses on island after island, most with jetties and strategically placed sun loungers. The sailing area looked wonderful, and a good set of charts would seem compulsory, not just to find the right channels but also to know where you are amongst all the islands. We stopped off at an island with a harbour between tall cliffs where we moored for lunch (copious amounts of delicious chicken soup – some people had several helpings, more homemade bread and fruit to follow).
On our return, an opportunity to visit the six yachts.
Saturday Gala Dinner
Despite the AGM being billed as informal including the Saturday evening dinner, as we gathered at Gerhart’s Villa for pre-dinner drinks there was a full spectrum of dress, from dinner suit and mess dress through to jeans and everything in between, including a great variety of colour in the shoe line. Hans Kettering felt Mike France’s bow-tie tying skills could be improved and thought he could do better.

Dinner started in the traditional way with Rob Snoeks as Chairman introducing our hosts Aud and Jon-Martin, drinking from the Founders Cup, and this year we all got to have a swig too.
To experience Rob’s recognition talk for David Olley, please go to the S&S UK web site http://sparkmanstephensuk.info/page88.html

Another delicious meal, this time roast pork, followed by the most delicious cloudberries picked by Aud’s sister, a Norwegian speciality, a lovely saffron yellow, served with ice-cream. Patrick Mathiesen proposed a toast to Olin Stephens, the reason why we had all travelled to Bragdøya. And so to our tents.
Sunday Annual General Meeting

Sunday 4.30am, a clanging of bells, and baa, baa, baa. Those cute sheep had found our campsite and were having a fine old time playing and leaping around in the early morning.

After another fine breakfast it was time for the AGM itself and following that, lunch!

Sadly the lunch saw the end of the programme, so with several farewells, the ferry sailed back and forth several times to the mainland until only the six yachts and their crew plus the six of us on the road trip were left. We waved off the six yachts to begin their flotilla cruise, the first night in Kristiansand for dinner and then north east along the Norwegian coast towards Oslo. Unbelievably, this would be the last time we would see Ali Peters.

The sun was still high in the sky so we circumnavigated Bragdøya on foot, finding more lovely views and small coves. A very convivial evening followed in Gerhart’s Villa, and an almost peaceful night in the campsite. The sheep had set their alarms slightly later, rocking up at 5:30 instead, with bells clanging and baaing happily.

The morning saw the weather breaking, and with it clouds of midges, however we just managed to strike camp before the rain started.

The final trip in the ferry was a bit wet, so as two of our party left to travel back via Copenhagen it was a damp farewell as the remaining four retraced their steps on the fast cat back to the UK.

What a fantastic weekend, thank-you Aud and Jon-Martin, and thank-you weather-gods.

Louise France
Annual General Meeting on Bragdøya, Norway
Friday 25 - Sunday 27 May 2018

To read the AGM minutes, please go to the S&S Association UK web site here
http://sparkmanstephensuk.info/page89.html

To see all the pictures from the event, please go to the S&S Association web site here
http://sparkmanstephensuk.info/page89.html