

News From the Cockpit No. 437/2026

Rod Stephens Ideas on Construction

when sailing yachts were designed to sail.

Listening to many boatbuilders today, one might almost forget it. We are living in an era in which prospective owners are told how essential it is for a sailing yacht to have the now apparently indispensable garage on board (*even hearing the word "garage" used in connection with a sailing boat is enough to make us seasick*) generous sunbathing areas on deck, cockpits designed to host eighteen people on a 50-foot boat, fridges in the cockpit, air conditioning in each cabin, microwave ovens... and all the rest of it. One also hears it suggested that sailing in a force 7 or 8 must be avoided, as boats are definitely not intended for that sort of weather. All of this is often presented as *progress*. To us, it looks rather more like *decline*, because the object we are talking about is (or should be) a boat designed to sail, and to do so safely in every conditions. Our thoughts therefore turn to (real) sailing boats: those conceived to sail well rather than simply to look attractive in a marina, unless, of course, one happens to prefer the current fashion for yachts with maximum beam carried well aft and rather less attention paid to graceful lines, or to take their owners from the berth to the beach a mile away (in a perfect weather day). And whenever one reflects on what makes a true sailing yacht, it is impossible not to think of Rod Stephens and of the construction principles that were at the very foundation of Sparkman & Stephens and of the S&S Swans. Rod Stephens expressed these principles with his usual practical wisdom. What follows is a reminder of the kind of thinking that shaped the original Sparkman & Stephens Swans, and that remains as relevant today as it was then.

"...above all, keep simplicity in mind when looking over a boat. The push-button temptations of our age are fine, but strength and craftsmanship are a far better investment for most sailors..."
— Rod Stephens

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Sparkman & Stephens designed Swan 48/033 **Dantes**, at home in any weather (here in a force 9/10 gale)

"These S&S Swans Are Made for Sailing"

S&S Swan 48/033, Message from Former Custodian

we want to share a message we have just received from former Custodian of S&S Swan 48/033 **Hush**, who just handed his S&S Swan to a new (super happy) Custodian

I would like to thank the S&S Swan Association for the support throughout the process. In my opinion, it attracts exactly the right kind of genuine and knowledgeable buyers—people who truly appreciate the remarkable seakeeping design and build quality of these beautiful classic yachts. I would highly recommend this route to anyone looking to buy or sell, as it allows direct engagement with owners rather than going through a generalist brokerage.

R.W. S&S Swan 48/033 (former Custodian)

P.S. We would like to remind our readers that we are not brokers. Our aim is simply and only to help S&S Swan Custodians who wish to sell their yachts and to assist prospective buyers during the purchasing process. Needless to say, our support is provided entirely on a complimentary basis; we do not accept any form of commission, nor any gifts of any kind.

The S&S Swan Association exists solely to stand alongside S&S Swan Owners, or, as we prefer to call them, Custodians.

Do We Buy a S&S Swan 55?

My previous boat was a **Nicholson 43** (Sarabande of Dart affectionately nicknamed Saraboo) and my partner, Paul, has a **1939 Fred Shepherd** classic wooden yawl called Amokura. We enjoy cruising, socialising and racing (various UK & French classics events, Fastnets, Dartmouth regatta, club racing...) both together and separately. We discussed what boat, if any, would suit of is us and which attributes were essential – fast, larger than we have, beautiful and lower maintenance than wood! As both of our boats are really very pretty, we couldn't settle on a solution so we continued to fettle and manage two boats. Separately, I am good friends with Ben Morris and have sailed extensively on Lulotte (**Swan 55/014 yawl**) but, given that (1) there were only 15 built (and 14 still sailing), half of them yawls, and (2) she is a super powerful beast of a mighty girl, I felt that this was a step too far. And then **S&S Swan 55/016 Valhalla** came up for sale and a friend pointed out that we didn't have to sail with everything up all the time and on her ears! So, Ben joined Paul and I on a little foray to meet her and say hello. The rest is history ... the owners (Nick and Sam) were incredibly helpful and we finally navigated the VAT issues (thanks Brexit) and had her safely delivered to Dartmouth from Mallorca with no Orca nibbles. She arrived in June 2025 and we had a lot of fun doing some basic works and improvements, exploring the capacious lockers and sailing her.

Welcome to Valhalla

She sails like a dream – we cruised ten days Channel Islands & Brittany, went swimming and anchoring, did a couple of white sails club races and then raced in a windy Dartmouth Regatta. We discovered just how tired the genoa was as it blew confetti aft with each tack, we wore out the cockpit crew who are used to a 43' boat with a smallish genoa, blew the main tack whilst reefed, lost a few main cars, structurally altered the pole during a disastrous (and very well filmed – [see Youtube](#) ...) kite hoist where we also fatally adjusted the kite under the keel (we won a prize for sailing backwards to retrieve it). But... we did win one race against Ben on Lulotte and were 20 seconds behind him in another – a steep (expensive) and incredibly good fun learning curve! We have been amazed just how many people we know (and are now meeting) who have sailed with Valhalla over the years – and incredibly grateful to benefit from their knowledge and advice as we optimise some of the rigging and deck gear.

Forward Planning

During 2026, we plan to race Falmouth Classics, Classic Channel Regatta and Dartmouth Regatta with some other RDYC / RTYC / BYC passage racing and weekly club racing. It is likely that we will head to Brittany or the Scillies during August for some lazy cruising and working from home. We would be delighted to socialise and meet other S&S Swan owners if the opportunity arises perhaps via S&S Swan Association's newsletter. We have initiated works to improve battery management gubbinz, replace the kicker which we also broke, some new main mast halyard blocks and winches, deck & topsides cosmetic facelift, some new running rigging, wind instruments, plotter, comms and.... we are saving for a new teak deck which will be needed at some point. In the meantime, we are actively seeking (amongst other things) a new spinnaker (min 1.5oz, max 18m luff, 11m foot) and I would love new s/s dorade vents (7") but they seem like a luxury when we have white-ish ones already ; (On the off chance that any S&S Swan owners may have such treasurable items in your garages and would like to sell them, then please do get in touch with me (annemarie500@gmail.com)). Wishing you all fair winds and look forward to sharing an update after our first full year – fingers crossed for fun and sun during this summer of 2026!

Anne-marie Coyle & Paul Moxon (**Valhalla**)



Anne-marie at the helm of S&S Swan 55/016 Valhalla, Dartmouth Regatta, 2025

2026 Swan Heritage Reunion

Capraia Island, 19 . 20 . 21 June 2026

Participants (list updated March 31):

S&S Swan 36/010 Isabella
S&S Swan 40/047 Star Swan *
S&S Swan 41/003 Diana **
S&S Swan 41/004 Cial II
S&S Swan 41/025 Lithian
S&S Swan 43/047 Kokkola
S&S Swan 47/002 Hypatia
S&S Swan 47/014 Typon***
S&S Swan 47/016 Grampus
S&S Swan 47/029 Sarabande
S&S Swan 47/040 Sweet Mama
S&S Swan 47/041 Tortuga
S&S Swan 47/051 Djata
S&S Swan 47/056 Black Tie
S&S Swan 47/069 Vanessa
S&S Swan 57/006 Matchless
S&S Swan 57/037 Bianca di Navarra
S&S Swan 65/040 Une Joie de Vivre

RH Swan 39/029 Katia

GF Swan 46/019 Assidous

GF Swan 651/007 Lunz am Meer

*Owner is flying to Capraia to join us from Pórtugal
**Owners are flying to Capraia to join us from Finland
***Owners are flying to Capraia to join us from San Francisco, USA

Provisional schedule:

Friday, 19 June 2026
Arrival, welcome cocktail
Saturday, 20 June 2026
Fleet sailing around the island, followed by dinner for all Owners and Crew
Sunday, 21 June 2026
Farewell day

22 June: for those sailing south/east: regatta to Argentario

If you are Owner of a Swan Classic and want to participate, please **contact us!**

Newsletter Archive

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(est. 2000)

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S&S Swan . The Original Swan



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