

SWAN EUROPEANS, A FAMILY AFFAIR

By John Roberson

It says something about a regatta when first and second places in the class for the biggest boats are entered by 'the Leask family' and 'the de Graaf family' – yes, the Swan European Championships is definitely a family affair. One suspects that all Swan regattas are like that, but this event that happens in Cowes alternate years always seems to have a particularly family friendly and inclusive atmosphere.

Other pleasant family touches included the oldest boat in the regatta, *Carte Blanche*, being sailed by the grandson of the owner Jem Tetley, who watched proudly from the vantage point of the Royal Yacht Squadron while the new generation of sailors in the family achieved a respectable mid-fleet result. We suspect that under the guidance of young Tom, the only way is up the results sheet for the revered third Swan ever built, which is also the oldest one still in active service. Indeed this 36-foot classic Swan was sparkling, with the young team having put in some time on the varnish and other shiny bits.

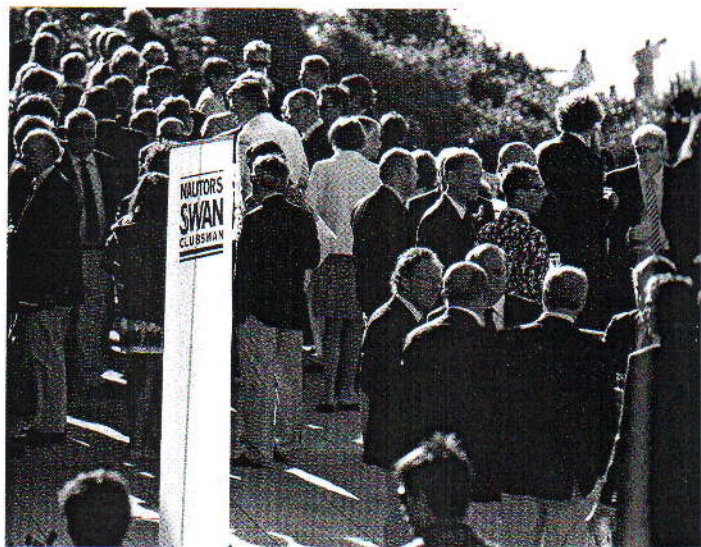
At the other end of the age spectrum in the fleet of 46 entries was the brand new Swan 53 *Raika*, fresh out of the box, and taking in the championships en route from Finland to what will be her home in India. Owner Jamshyd Godrej had bought in some heavy hitters to help him around the track, including Australian Jamie Wilmot and one of England's best navigators Hugh Welbourn.

The honour of being biggest boats in the fleet was jointly held by two legends of the Swan line, Richard Lofthouse's *Desperado* and Kings Legend owned by Holland's G van Liebergen. These two venerable Swan 65s had a tussle all week, with *Desperado* just getting the better of the results in the final standings, though Kings Legend has an illustrious history, having finished second in the 1977 Whitbread Round the World Race.

One has to wonder whether the Swan owners have influence in very high places, because the event fitted into about the only predominantly sunny and warm week of the first half of the summer, with mostly pleasant breezes on a sparkling Solent. As Edward Leask of Magical Mystery Tour commented at the end of the first day, "It was a great day, fantastic weather. The race committee were really sensible to delay the



below:
Opening
reception on
the Lawn of
the Royal Yacht
Squadron



start by three to four hours and then we had a nice ten-knot breeze."

Edward Leask, who made his name in sailing back in the days when the Flying Dutchman was an Olympic class, has obviously lost none of his world championship-winning touch, steering this his latest Swan, launched earlier this year, to four race wins during the week, to take overall victory in Class A. The members of his family who joined him in the crew for this week were daughter Cailah and son Magnus.

The de Graaf family, sailing Baraka GP, a Swan 42, who battled on the water all week with the Leask tribe in class A, were skippered by father Peter, with sons Oliver and Paul in the crew. The Baum family's Swan 48, Elan, with father Harald in charge and sons Martin and Daniel along with daughter Anna in the crew, took second place in Class B. In the Swan 45 fleet there was further family success with Peter de Ridder's Dutch entry Checkmate finishing second, crewed by, amongst others, his two daughters and his wife.

Though British boats won all four classes, the Dutch were the second most successful of the eight nations that were represented in Cowes, getting a top three place in three of the four classes. At the top of each class racing was tight, with the final outcome depending on the last day's results.

The Leask family versus de Graaf family contest in Class A was the closest, ending the series on equal points, but the home team took it on a count-back. Edward Leask summed up the final day for the Magical Mystery Tour team, "We put ourselves under real pressure by a premature start in the first race and then not only had to win the next race but rely on boats behind us finishing in a theoretical order. Sometimes God is on your side!"

Germany

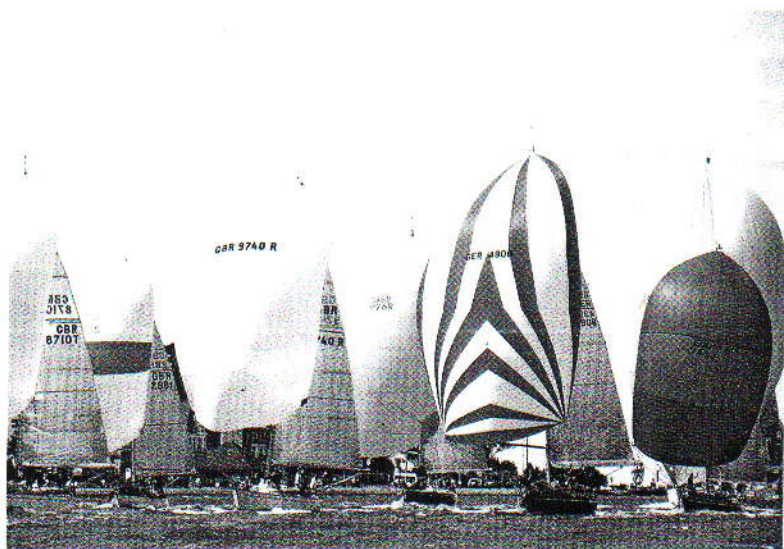
Iain and Graham Thomson had a three-point margin with their Swan 40, Sloop John T in Class B over the Baum family's Elan from Germany. Harald Baum commented "The race was very close with two other boats, Christina and Sloop John T. We fought the whole week against them; it was great fun. And I think it was very good that Sloop John won overall; we won the race today and we did our utmost."

The top three boats in Class C were separated by just three points, with Stephen James's Jacobite starting the series with a pair of wins on the first day, but by the end of the final day having dropped to third behind Alvine XV (Alistair Evans) and Cisne in the hands of David Collins and Tony Thorpe. Alvine's owner was suitably jubilant, "I'm over the moon, it's been a brilliant regatta. One of the best I've done for a long time."

Glynn Williams and his crew on Wolf in Sheeps Clothing managed to hang on to the top spot in the Swan 45 Class by one point, from the de Ridder family's Checkmate, after a cliff-hanger of a final day. **CY**



Edward Leask, Glynn Williams, Alistair Evans, Iain and Graham Thomson winners of the Swan European Regatta 2011



Downwind at the Swan European Regatta



Downwind along the green onboard Class A Winners Magical Mystery Tour Club