



PERIHELION

 **113**

**Winter
2014**

***Comet Class Association
Newsletter***

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 Open meeting reports to Brian Welham and Sue Coppenhall
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Chairman's Report

Chair's mutterings

Now that the Comet open meeting season has finished and the boat is snugly packed away for the winter, it is time to work out how to scratch that itch of wanting to sail during the winter months. As my own club is all safely packed away above any potential winter flooding, there are a number of events further afield which in the last few years have been combined into a winter traveller series, namely the Sailjuice Winter Series.



This year, as well as last year a few of the more hardy helms have entered some of these events, the most well known of which is the Bloody Mary held in early January at Queen Mary Sailing Club. As with every event, it would be nice to see a few Comets at this event to remind the other classes that we still exist and are as competitive as ever.

While looking forward to next year's sailing, you will see later on in this edition that we have got a busy start to the season already planned so there is no excuse not to be ready for the Association Championships that are being hosted by Cransley Sailing Club. Many thanks to Norah for all of her work in organising the event calendar each year with such a varied selection of locations. As yet these events have not been allocated to Aphelions but put them in your diary and make an effort to at-

tend and support the clubs that offer to run events for the Comet class.

Later in this addition are the final results for the 2014 Aphelions and Orbital, as well as the winners of the other annual trophies. Congratulations to Eddie Pope, Chris Robinson, and Bob Dodds for their success and commitment this year, not forgetting the large number of miles that they and other members have covered just to reach the events.

We will be at the Dinghy Show at the end of February and can always do with extra help on the stand. Please call John Sturgeon if you would like to help.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Paul Hinde C844

PS The Members page password on the new website is
halleys2014

The photographs in this issue were printed with the kind permission from the following.

Front Cover	Nigel Fern
Page 14 &15 &16	Nigel Fern
Page 23 & 24	Steve Gregory
Page 28	Nigel Fern

Perihelion 114

Please send your contributions for the next issue of Perihelion by

1st March 2015

To Brian Welham, Class Editor, 9 Murrell Court St Neots Cambs PE19 1LL
e-mail bwelham@sky.com

Secretary's Report

Notes from the committee:

1. It's time to look back at another successful season, with a full programme of Open events and two enjoyable Championships. Thank you to everyone who has taken part in whatever way, whether on the water or by helping on the shore.
2. Congratulations to Ian Coppenhall, who has returned to the Class in fine form and ended the year by winning the Orbital Trophy.
3. The Aphelion results indicated some close racing once again, with some changes in the winners. Eddie Pope won the Southern, Western and Central Aphelions. Chris Robinson won the Northern event and Bob Dodds the Eastern Aphelion. Congratulations to you all, and "Well Done" to everyone who qualified. The Comet Fleet has an extremely active following and one which is the envy of other classes..
4. We had hoped to take part in the "Battle of the Classes" held during the Southampton Boat Show. Unfortunately we were only give a couple of weeks' notice of the event, which clashed with Open events. If we have more time next year we will try to send a representative.
5. We will have a stand at the Dinghy Show, which will be held at Alexandra Palace over the weekend of February 28th and March 1st. Once again John Sturgeon has taken on the organisation of this for us, and is busy with risk assessments and all the other required paperwork.
6. I'm busy sorting out the programme for 2015at the moment. So far all of the clubs who hosted events this year are proposing to do so again next year. I'm keeping my figure crossed that a couple of others will materialise, given that they have approached us.



7. The Association Championships will be at Cransley Sailing Club on Sunday 3rd and Monday 4th May. Cransley has hosted this event before, very successfully, so please support us if possible. The club is very central, by the junction of the A14 and A43, and not far off the A6. It's easily accessed from all directions!
8. For the Nationals we are delighted to have been invited back to Cardiff Yacht Club. The Nationals will probably be over the weekend of 21st – 23rd August (Friday, Saturday and Sunday). However, if the Extreme 40s have a change of plan, we may be able to go back to the Bank Holiday weekend (August 29th – 31st). We'll keep you posted.
9. For those of you who like a challenge during the winter, the Bloody Mary will be on January 10th 2015. Brian will be delighted to have your report of the event too!
10. Paul is in the process of setting up the survey about championships – keep an eye on your emails.
11. At the last Committee meeting we agreed that the new Treasurer should replace the old as a signatory on all bank accounts. The signatories will be Rhiaïn Bevan and Norah Jagers.
12. Thank you again to all the clubs which have hosted events for the Association during the year. Our Aphelion circuit depends on all the hard work behind the scenes by race officers, rescue boat crews and galley workers. Thank you all.

Have a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful 2015

Norah Jagers Class Secretary

Builder's Report

Once again, it seems to have been a busy year for Comet Dinghies, although thinking about it, maybe I should say a busy year for Andy Simmons, but the two are somewhat linked!

As for new boat sales, the other Comet from the Dinghy Show was sold to a lady at Reading Sailing Club in May as an Xtra.

Later in May we had an urgent phone call from Nick Cross of West Wilts Youth Sailing Association a "sailing youth club" in Westbury. They had a break in, hardly anything was taken, but the sail store was completely burnt down destroying booms, rudders, sails etc and destroying many dinghies stored nearby. As well as the usual Toppers and Picos etc they always had Comet Duo's and a couple of Versas. A load of booms, main-sails and rudders were delivered to Shearwater S C where they temporarily moved, on the way to see my new granddaughter in Dover. The return trip saw me collecting three older Comets from Crawley Mariners each with similar deck/mast hole problems. A new Versa and Duo were delivered to West Wilts S A in June.

From what I've heard the Nationals were great, I wanted to be there but had my son's wedding in Cornwall.

I was pleased to see Guy Wilkins decided to use his Xtra rig. Bewl was obviously a lot bigger than his home club Chipstead so it gave him a great opportunity to learn more about the finer points of tuning and tweaking the Xtra rig. The three days racing included a very wide range of wind conditions, Guys thoughts on the event and his Xtra are also included in this issue. It was good to see Steve Harvey back in a Comet after a few years with the Solos. Previously Steve sailed an Xtra but this time

around he's racing a standard Comet, quite effectively, when I look at the National results!

I think both their performances show that there are no hard and fast rules about Xtra v Standard, light winds v heavy winds and light crew v heavy. A good sailor will always do well whatever his rig. I tried to make the overall performance of the two rigs equal as possible but it is a fact that the Xtra rig is "easier" to control and manage on and off the water.

Forgetting the hot guys and girls at the front of the fleet, I honestly believe the average (or below) sailors performance is improved with the Xtra especially when conditions are a bit "testing"

Less heeling and rolling with more stability equals more race starts, less capsizes, less retirements and more finishes. Result!

Soon I'll be building a couple of Comets for the Dinghy Show. At the moment we are waiting for a new batch of Standard Comet Sails to arrive but Hyde have given us a small price rise on the next batch so if you want to beat the price rise.... Sails can be collected from the Dinghy Show to avoid carriage cost. Standard sails with Zippers and Xtra sails won't go up until new stock is ordered and we have plenty of them in stock anyway. Even if you don't think you might want a new sail until May, let me know soon as possible so we can plan our orders with Hyde. In the Spring the lead time with them can be as much as three months. No deposits required of course and we won't hold you to it if you change your mind.

I think I've gone on enough now so I shall wish you all a Merry Xmas and I'll see some of you at the Dinghy Show.

Andrew Simmons Comet Dinghies

Three rigs one class—X-tra time?

Guy Wilkins

I have been a Comet sailor and Association member for well over twenty years now and can not remember ever writing anything for the magazine. So, following our recent class AGM at Chipstead and my experience of competing in the Xtra rig during this year's nationals, I thought I might share some thoughts and reflections around the "three rigs, one class" discussions.

I got my first Comet in 1990 following an exciting trial sail in Comet number 174 at Chipstead Sailing Club. I must have capsized more in the first month of sailing Comet "Kawalski" than in twenty years of racing the Mirror! Great fun, I seem to remember. Anyway, in most conditions, it was a pleasure to sail. However, in that first season, I explored reefing when the wind was up and blowing "old boots". Never quite satisfactory for racing but definitely an option if you wanted to go out to play on those extreme days. Since then, I have tried all three different rigs as a way to enjoy and be able to sail in all conditions. I am convinced that going out in strong winds with either of the more manageable rigs is a great way to develop and improve heavy weather skills and confidence. I would like to share some of my recent experiences and reflections.

Until this season, I had only used the Xtra rig during those extremely windy conditions. However, I decided to try a few races to test and compare performances in lighter conditions during some club races. I probably didn't really do enough races to make very accurate comparisons. However, the first day at the 2014 Nationals at Bewl was very windy and had a forecast of similar conditions for the next day, which had four races scheduled. I decided to commit and have a little play with the Xtra over the whole event, partly as an experiment and partly as I was concerned how my body might cope with 3 days racing in succession! Peter Mountford, my son Ben and several others also elected to use the Xtra on the Friday.

My personal target was still to try to put together my best series but particularly to "level the playing field" with the heavy weather specialists on the first day. Unfortunately I didn't sail well enough on the windy first day to exploit any perceived advantage of the Xtra rig to get those top results I'd planned for. Despite good starts and top place

mark roundings, I made the same windy weather errors that I've made before in the standard rig. In one race, I was caught out on a reach and nose dived while in contention for the lead, which cost me a place going slowly up the next beat with a cockpit full of water. The other race was compromised by getting stuck in irons after a poor tack. This is something that I had now experienced with both rigs in a strong breeze.

So, I felt slightly disappointed at close of play on day one, as my results looked similar to what I might have expected if I'd just used the standard sail.

The wind on the second day was much moderated and not the usual conditions that would have prompted me to choose the Xtra rig. A full days racing with bright sunshine and variable winds, but still opportunities to use the toe straps. This saw two of my best races of the whole event, a 1st and a 2nd place. However, I would definitely put it down to good starts and managing to make the most of wind shifts rather than rig choice. Nevertheless, I was starting to learn how to get



the best speed from the Xtra sail, due to a growing familiarity, particularly by exploring different sail settings. By the end of racing on the second day, I was still lying in 3rd place and close enough on points to make a challenge for overall second on the final day.

The wind was light on Sunday and definitely not what I would call Xtra conditions. However, I was quite pleased to find myself still in contention to win a very light last race right up until the last leg. Ultimately we saw Steve Harvey securing a deserved first place by bravely splitting

from the leaders and following a zephyr in the dying breeze. I finished sixth in that race but 3rd overall with the following set of results: 3, 6, 2, 5, (11), 1, (10), 6,. The two lans both finished ahead of me, which was pretty much an expected "pecking order". The rig experiment had reinforced that Andrew Simmons seems to have done a pretty good job of designing a very similar rig that rewards good sailing whichever one you happen to use.

Well done to Ian Coppenhall on his National win. A worthy champion in all conditions.

Anyway, what had I learned from racing at the 2014 Nationals using the Xtra rig. We had certainly experienced a variety of different conditions? I'd probably conclude that good starting and a race low in mistakes remain the key factors that determine overall position. It was certainly more fun for me sailing in stronger winds with the Xtra but my body still ached and it does not guarantee that you will not make mistakes or get better results. I really don't think I would have placed much differently, whichever rig I had chosen. Despite that, I would have probably still opted to use the standard sail on the final day if I'd had the choice.

As I send this article, we have just had our class AGM and a vote whether to allow our 26 race series to include a combination of rig results totalled to give one overall score. This is currently how the Association Orbital series works but not for results at an open meeting or National championship series. Is there an anomaly here? Would it be too radical to allow a free choice of rigs to be used over a weekend at our Nationals or even at a single day open meeting? In recent years, I'm sure there have been some sailors who will have decided not attend events after looking at the forecast or maybe spent a whole day ashore when conditions have become too windy for them to use the standard rig. I suppose the important question to ask is whether those sailors who only have the standard rig might feel this would be a step too far and leave them feeling that they would have to buy an Xtra rig.

Incidentally, the result of our own vote at Chipstead is to continue to allow complete parity of racing between the different rigs but also for all results to be combined in our season long series. So, what do fellow Comet/Xtra sailors think? ***"Three rigs, One class" ?***

Guy Wilkins C806

Things to look out for in 2015

Early Comet events (as at 1st December 2014)

This is early warning before you get the official programme

Opens

April:

Sat 11 th	Shearwater
Sun 12 th	Sutton Bingham
Sat 18 th	Fishers Green
Sun 19 th	Up River
Sat 25 th	Burghfield
Sun 26 th	Hunts (this is provisiona)

May:

Sat 9 th	Winsford Flash.
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Championship

Sun 24th	Association Championships
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Mon 25th	at Cransley
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Other sailing events

Planning your holidays? Why not sail at Mudeford Week 2015 and compete in the Comet Open on the Sunday?

The Mudeford Open is on Sunday 2nd August

Shows

The **RYA Suzuki Dinghy Show** at
Alexandra Palace London N22 7AY

Saturday 28th February and **Sunday 1st March.**

Your Comet Class Association will be there as will Comet Dinghies and the leading chandlers and experts in sailing dinghies

Don't forget the **CWM FX Boat Show**
on 9—18 January at ExCel

Staunton Harold Comet Open 18th October 2014

Eleven visitors joined five local Comet sailors to compete in the penultimate Comet Open Meeting of the 2014 season held at Staunton Harold Sailing Club concurrently with the Solo class. The forecast strong wind at Force 4 – 5 did not disappoint, and held a steady SSW direction throughout the day with an occasional stronger gust spicing up the event. The downwind legs produced some spectacular planes, but most competitors also experienced multiple capsizes which kept the rescue boats busy throughout the day and added to the spectacle enjoyed by those on the shore.



Competitors at the briefing held before the start of the racing heard one of the more memorable remarks made at such an occasion:- in answer to the question as to whether there are any shallows came the reply “Yes, round the edge”. Six sailors elected to hoist their Xtra sail, one used a Mino sail, and the remainder used their Standard sail. For each race, there was no start line bias, and the direction of the wind allowed the race officer to set a first beat down the length of the reservoir.

The first race included two beats per lap, and after the start, Nigel Austin led round the windward mark at the end of the first beat, followed by Chris Robinson, Jonathan Latham, Michael Ettershank and Peter Mountford. Throughout the race and all through the fleet, capsizes produced place changes, and Nigel and Chris had a close race. On the final lap, Nigel unfortunately capsized near a gybe mark, and Chris finished in first place, Nigel held onto second place, Michael was third, and Peter just managed to squeeze past Eddie Pope at the windward mark of the second short beat to finish fourth and fifth respectively.



After lunch provided by the home club's Laser sailors, it was decided by the toss of a coin to hold the second and third race back-to-back. For these two races, there was only one beat per lap, but compared to the first race, the beat at the start of the lap was extended to a mark further upwind. In the second race, Jonathan Latham rounded the windward mark in front, followed by Michael Ettershank, Paul Hinde, Chris Robinson and Alan Bennett. Unfortunately, Alan capsized near the first downwind mark, and Jonathan broached the wrong side of the next mark, letting Peter Mountford through to fourth followed by Nigel Austin and Bob Dodds. Chris got past Paul about half-way through the race, and Nigel had overtaken Peter by the end of the last beat. Michael and Chris held on to take first and second place respectively, Paul was third, Nigel finished fourth and Peter fifth.

Only eleven competitors decided to start the third race. Alan Bennett was first round the windward mark, followed by Paul Hinde, Chris Robinson, Michael Ettershank and Nigel Austin. At the second downwind mark, Alan had held onto his lead despite initially heading for the wrong mark. Nigel pulled through to the front with Paul in second place. Chris was still in third place when he capsized at a gybe mark letting through Michael and Eddie Pope. However, he recovered to get past Eddie and Paul, and so by the start of the last lap, the order was Nigel, Michael and Chris. Each of these latter three competitors needed to win the final race to be the overall winner of the event. The wind eased in strength during this last lap, and Michael had taken over the lead by the last windward mark and held on to take first place, with Nigel in second place, Chris third, Paul was fourth and Eddie finished fifth.

The overall winner was Michael Ettershank, second place went to Chris Rob-



inson, and third to Nigel Austin. The Ladies' Prize was won by Rhiain Bevan, Eddie Pope was the first Ancient Mariner, Bob Dodds was the first Veteran, and Peter Mountford was the first home club sailor.

Peter Mountford (C864) & Alan Bennett (C126)

Ran	Helm	Rig	Sail	Helm	Club	R1	R2	R3	Total	Nett
1st	Male	Std	84	Michael Ettershank	Up River YC	-3	1	1	5	2
2nd	Male	Std	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield SC	1	2	-3	6	3
3rd	AM	Xtra	718	N Austin	Cransley	2	-4	2	8	4
4th	Male	Xtra	844	Paul Hinde	Severn	-8	3	4	15	7
5th	AM	Xtra	864	Peter Mountford	SHSC	4	5	12	21	9
6th	AM	Std	804	Eddie Pope	Ogston	5	-7	5	17	10
7th	Vet	Std	869	Bob Dodds	CMYC	-7	6	7	20	13
8th	AM	Std	126	Alan Bennett	SHSC	17	8	6	31	14
9th	Lady	Xtra	724	Rhiain Bevan	Cransley	6	-9	8	23	14
10th	Male	Std	556	Andrew Beaumont	Attenborough	-12	11	9	32	20
11th	AM	Std	532	John Coppenhall	Hunts	10	10	17	37	20
12th	Vet	Std	5257	Dave Waymont	SHSC	17	12	10	39	22
13th	Vet	Std	349	Jonathan Latham	WFSC	9	17	17	43	26
14th	Vet	Xtra	740	Richard Barnett	SHSC	11	16	17	44	27
15th	Male	Xtra	845	Luke Harmer	SHSC	17	16	17	50	33
15th	AM	Minc	500	Henry Jagers	Beer	17	16	17	50	33

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Kettering
Northamptonshire NN16 9ST



COMET CLASS ASSOCIATION

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association

www.cometsailing.org.uk

Application for Membership

New Member Renewal (Please mark as appropriate)

Category of membership Applied for:-

FULL (£18)

FAMILY (More than one family member using the same boat) (£24)

ASSOCIATE (Non-Owner) (£18)

Personal Details:-

Mr, Mrs, Ms, Miss, Other:.....Forename (or name by which known)

Surname

Address.....
.....
.....
County Postcode.....

Telephone..... email.....
Boat Sail No(s).....Boat Name(s).....
Main Sailing Club.....

Remittance £..... (£18 Full/Associate Member or £24 Family Member)

Signature..... Date

Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to Comet Class Association

Please return this form with your remittance to the Hon. Treasurer:

RHIAIN BEVAN
30 Sycamore Close
Kettering
Northamptonshire NN16 9ST

(Membership of the Association and acceptance of the rules by a member will deem to constitute consent to the holding of relevant personal data for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1984.

Send to
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30 Sycamore Close
Kettering
Northamptonshire NN16 9ST

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e-mail cometdinghies@btconnect.com

More Things to look out for in 2015

The Sail Juce Winter Series has 4 more events

Saturday 3rd January

Oxford Blue

at Oxford SC

Saturday 10 January

Bloody Mary

at Queen Mary SC

Saturday 24th January

Steve Nicholson Trophy

at Northampton SC

Saturday 31 January &

Sunday 1st February

Tiger Trophy

at Rutland SC

Comet Nationals 2014 Bewl a View from the Back

Having occasionally written an article for Perihelion, regular readers will know that I prefer a more informal, leisurely style, rather than providing a blow-by-blow account of the racing. In fact 'informal and leisurely' probably best describes my approach to sailing as a whole and it was this in mind that I signed up for my second Comet Nationals in August at Bewl in Kent. Having suffered a record number of wipeouts at the very windy 2012 event, I figured that it couldn't possibly be as bad this year.

Wrong! Bewl 2014, day 1 was a very big blow, with day 2 nearly as bad. So having arrived at the delightful club my objectives rapidly changed to a) finish all the races and b) not capsizes as much as in 2012.

My pass-out to attend the weekend was conditional on the cheaper option of camping, so I dug out one ancient hike tent and diligently set about pegging and erecting the inner tent and pitching the fly sheet. Realised that this was the camping equivalent to the dark ages when Nigel Austin showed up at the next pitch with his new bendy igloo thing. With what seemed like a deft flick of the wrist, his tent was up and ready.

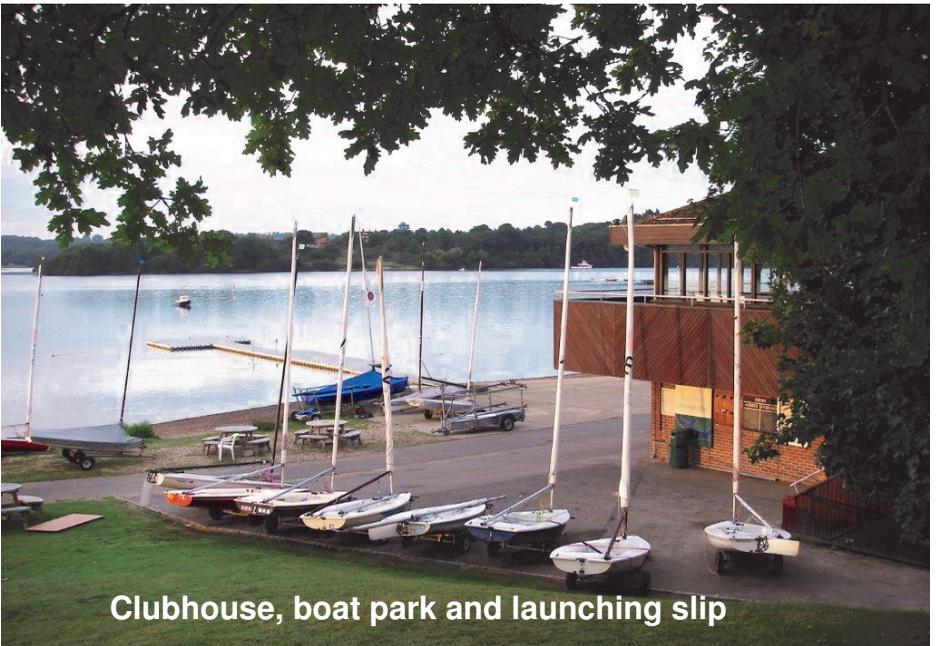
The Friday races were physically exhausting and I remember suffering 7 capsizes before giving up counting. I was most grateful to Ben Palmer who grabbed my boat after a failed attempt to approach the jetty in strong winds, resulted in yet another swim! The great thing about Comet sailors is that – once the racing is over – everyone helps out. After a hot shower life seemed more tranquil and much of the group headed off to a local pub recommended by Bewl commodore Mike, who also joined us. Norah and Henry were kind enough to offer me a lift and on arriving I offered to buy their first drink. I was somewhat taken aback to be asked for 2 pints of Harveys. Although it had been a challenging day, I assumed they had decided to hit the sherry big time. I was quickly disabused of this scurrilous thought and was introduced to the delights of Harveys bitter (not Bristol Cream).

The evening reminded me of what I believe makes the Comet open circuit such a pleasure to join in with. The great pub grub and entertaining company was only slightly marred by the arrival of the local Friday-night disco in the adjoining marquee, complete with booming bass and noisy DJ. This did not prevent Nigel having us all inthrall to his magician – or should I say telepathic – skills. We were all convinced he could somehow work out where a coin was hidden. I suspect one side-effect of Harveys must be an increase of gullibility, but I won't share the secret of how he did it.

A surprisingly comfortable night in my tent was rudely interrupted by the thump of compressed air crow-scarers going off at 6am. The local farmers



Sunrise over Bewl Lake



Clubhouse, boat park and launching slip



No 1 sailed by Clive (the old Chairman) No 844 sailed by Paul (the new Chairman) Below is a “selfie” from Steve showing his modern! (1970) tent



Comets on the line waiting for the start signal

probably have a big issue with the geese and I guess try to deter them flying from their roost on the huge expanse of Bewl water, to feed on the crops. Saturday's winds were a bit lighter, but still quite blustery – enough to ensure I capsized a couple of times both am and pm. I've always struggled to keep my Comet upright in anything more than moderate winds, despite the best efforts of the old hands to help me improve. The obvious risk area is gybing and on a couple of occasions I decided to wear round to avoid the risk, but most times I gave it a go – with about a 50:50 success rate. If anyone wants me to write a book '100 ways to capsize a Comet, I will accept the commission.

The early evening was used for a short and very proficiently run AGM, followed by fireworks, again organised by Commodore Mike. The two Nationals I have attended at Bewl have been remarkable for the efficient but friendly hospitality shown by Mike and his assistant Jo, who are a really dedicated team. The fireworks were an impressive show, but shortly after repairing to our tents, the camping fraternity were treated to another, absolutely huge display from somewhere over the other side of the water. I was left to ponder who could afford to put up a few grand's worth of gunpowder in the middle of pristine rural Kent (Either Tarquin's 21st birthday bash, or perhaps the farmer thought he'd be more creative and frighten the geese back to Siberia)

Didn't bother to set my alarm, and to order, the crow-scarers woke me again at 6. It was just before dawn, so I decided to get up to see if I could photograph the sunrise. I wandered down to the foreshore in front of the clubhouse and was rewarded with a beautiful sunrise over the dam, with multi-layered clouds and blue sky above. Perfectly tranquil after two lively days racing, it promised to be much easier out on the water. In order to earn a 'full English' at the club cafeteria, I took a brisk stroll along the shore path which offered some wonderful views of Bewl water.

The third days sailing was much easier – force 2-3 – but I still managed to fall in. This time by hiking out too hard when a lull hit. Sigh.

The whole event was rounded off by the prize-giving and after applause for the very deserving winners had died down, I was amazed to be awarded a trophy for 'Endeavour': a delightful model Comet with stainless steel sail made by David Jobling. Apparently it was for the 'lowest placed sailor who managed to finish all the races'. Objective a) achieved! However I had failed to achieve objective b) and had actually capsized more this year, so I felt the trophy should really have been presented to me upside down.

Thanks to everyone involved in organising another superb and memorable Comet nationals

Steve Gregory C57

Headgear

By Peter Mountford

Bang.....aargghoww! Yet again, I had forgotten to crouch low enough when gybing, and the boom had collided painfully with my head. Only this time, I remember thinking that it felt much worse than usual and I distinctly recall what seemed at the time to resemble lines of pink and white pixels going across my vision. It was “blowing a hooligan/gear-breaking weather” at an Open Meeting last summer (2013) and I had capsized at a gybe mark. What was so stupid about it was that I had done exactly the same thing on the previous lap but on that occasion had recovered quickly from a “dry capsize”, whereas on this second occasion, it was a totally “wet capsize” as the collision of my head with the boom had knocked me into the water and the boat had turned over completely. This was the fifth time I had capsized at this event, and maybe my concentration had started to slip. However, for once, I had been up with the front bunch of boats, and all I can remember afterwards was thinking that there was no time to feel sorry for myself, I just had to get the boat up again (which included unspearing the top of the mast from the mud!), and get back into the race. Another subsequent difference on this occasion was that instead of the bruising sensation going away quite quickly, it continued to spread down the side of my face for several days afterwards.

A couple of weeks later back at my home club, I learnt that one of the single-handed sailors had taken to wearing a safety helmet after a knock on the head by the boom while their boat was on dry land, and a couple of other members of the club had decided to follow suit. Coincidentally, during the first of that afternoon’s handicap races, the same thing happened as I described in the previous paragraph, I failed to get “water” at a gybe mark, and as I did a wide rounding to keep clear of the transom of the boat in front, a strong gust arrived from a different direction, and the boom found my head, sending me for another involuntary swim as the boat capsized (right in front of the clubhouse – where else!?!). By the time I had managed to lever the top of the mast out of the mud (again!), right the boat and flop exhausted into the bottom of the boat nursing a sore head, all hopes of an enjoyably close race with the other Comets had vanished as they had by then disappeared down the other end of the reservoir.

That was it. I needed no further persuasion. My head was just as precious (well at least, to me!) as all those helmet-wearing junior sailors in Optimists. I decided to get a safety helmet. The question was – what sort to get? Searching the Internet showed that the important features of a helmet include:- a comfortable and even fit to the head without any movement back-to-front or side-to-side, a secure means of attaching it to your head which will not allow the helmet to become dislodged after an impact and which will also allow an adjustment to be made to ensure a good fit, and for the adjustment to stay in place. The problem was that as far as I could tell, a helmet has not yet been produced which has been designed specifically for the dinghy sailor. So I plumped for a kayak canoe helmet which includes some ear protection, as it is at least intended for use in water sports and complies with the CE EN 1385 Water Sports Safety Standard. Since I started to wear it at the end of last season (2013), I now feel as incompletely dressed without it as I do without a lifejacket, unless there is very little wind, especially on a warm day, when I leave the helmet ashore.

The reader should look elsewhere for a comprehensive review of all the possible types of helmet, the detailed standards of safety which they should meet, and the types of brain injury which can result from a blow to the head. My purpose in writing this article is to explain why I have started wearing one and to present some “food for thought”. There have been several studies published on the effects of wearing a helmet in different sports, some of them with controversial findings. For instance, it has been argued that wearing a helmet encourages risk-taking behaviour (in the case of cyclists, it has even been argued that other road-users drive closer to cyclists who wear a helmet because they perceive them to be less at risk). Personally, the only situation I can think of in dinghy sailing where the helm can take a conscious decision to increase the risk of head-injury – apart from deciding whether or not to stay ashore - is when gybing a boat in a very strong wind rather than wearing round.

It may not look “cool” to wear a helmet, but the potential benefit for wearing one to me is obvious. Regardless of the arguments put for and against the likelihood of a dinghy sailor receiving a serious head injury, it is indisputable that a helmet will reduce the bruising from a less serious blow which is probably a far more likely occurrence. One fact which had a significant impact on my decision to wear one was learning that repeated blows to the head, even if they do not cause

concussion, may result in an adverse effect on brain-dependent skills such as memory and thinking abilities. What is also indisputable, is that you have only got one head, and so far, no-one has yet found a way to transplant a replacement – so you should look after it!

Towards the end of last season, I fell into conversation with a member of my home club who had worn a safety helmet for some time and who gave me some other reasons for wearing one which I had never thought of:- was it fair to expect the crew of a safety boat to have to deal with a sailor with a serious head injury, and who may even have been knocked unconscious into the water or even worse? Was it fair for the club officers to have to take the responsibility of having to contact the family members of a sailor involved in such an incident. Afterwards, when I thought that I had never known of such an incident in all the years I had been sailing, I quickly realised that just because you had never known such an incident to happen, it does not mean that one will never happen.

Peter Mountford (C864)



I put these 2 events in here to remind us that things can go wrong at times and a helmet might be a good idea. These wipe outs both occurred at the Staunton Harrold Open to Luke Harmer and Dave Waymont. **Ed**

Looking at Luke's problem reminds me of my piece about how not to capsize when running. *Don't allow the boom to go too far forward in strong winds!* In strong winds, I ensure my stopper knot is positioned to hold the boom back even if I let go of the mainsheet.

The Hossell Plate 2013

The Hossell Plate was donated in 2002 by Liz and Phillip Hossell as an annual award to the person judged by the committee to have made the greatest contribution to Comet sailing, and to enhancing the membership of the Comet Class Association.

Last year the Hossell Plate was awarded to people who have organised Comet events for many years.

This year the trophy goes to someone who has worked hard to promote the Comet at their club, with evidence in the growing numbers of Comets on the water. They were part of the team which hosted the Nationals in 2014, taking responsibility for the catering as they were unable to sail.

***The winner of the Hossell Plate 2014 is
Nigel Fern
of Staunton Harold Sailing Club***

The Pingewood Trophy

is awarded each year to the person who has entered the most events during the season. **Last year it was shared by Bob Dodds and Henry Jagers.**

This year Chris Robinson only missed 2 Comet events and so is the worthy winner of the trophy for 2014

Chris lives in Thatcham and sails at Burghfield Sailing Club (when he has time!). Like several of the helms who travel a lot, he keeps a Comet at his club and another at home, which is more convenient for a quick getaway after work.

The FATE Plate

The FATE plate was presented by Peter and Wendy Hayes in 2004, for Endeavour in the Face of Adversity.

This year there were no nominations for the FATE Plate, so your Committee has decided not to award it in 2014.

2014 Travellers (qualifying & results)

Orbital 2014												
	Sail	Helm	Club	Best 6 Open Meetings used to calculate Net						Associations - Staunton Harold	Nationals - Bewl Valley	Net
				1	1	1	1	1	1			
1st	636	Ian Coppenhall	Hunts	1	1	1	1			1	1	6
2nd	804	Eddie Pope	Ogston	1	1	1	1	1	1	-5	-10	6
3rd	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield	1	1	2	2	2	2	-10	-5	10
4th	869	Bob Dodds	Crawley	1	1	2	2	3	3	-8	-11	12
5th	800	Henry Jagers	Beer	1	2	2	2	3	3	-19	-19	13
6th	84	Michael Ettershank	Up River	1	1	2	3	3	4	-13	-6	14
7th	532	John Coppenhall	Hunts	1	2	3	3	5	5	-11	-20	19
8th	597	Ben Palmer	Baltic Wharf	2	3	3	3	4	4	(DNC)	-9	19
9th	701	Izac Dodds	Crawley	1	1	2	3	6	7	-16	-16	20
10th	711	Brian Welham	Maidenhead	3	3	4	5	5	5	-18	(DNC)	25
11th	864	Peter Mountford	Staunton Harold	5	5	5	6	8		6	-14	35
12th	400	John Sturgeon	Hawley Lake	5	5	6	6	6	7	-15	-25	35
13th	821	Clive Chapman	Shearwater	5	6	7	8	9	9	-22	-27	44
14th	844	Paul Hinde	Severn	4	9	10	10	11	11	-14	-17	55
15th	556	Andrew Beaumont	Attenborough	7	7	10	10	11	13	-24	-26	58
16th	724	Rhiain Bevan	Cransley	8	8	9	10	11		21	(DNC)	67

Southern Aphelion 2014									
	Sail	Helm	Club	Shearwater	Burghfield	Maidenhead	Hawley Lake	Cotswold	Net
2nd	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield	1	3	(DNC)	(DNC)	6	10
3rd	597	Ben Palmer	Baltic Wharf	2	6	-8	4	-8	12
4th	800	Henry Jagers	Beer	4	5	3	-7	-11	12
5th	711	Brian Welham	Maidenhead	-11	(DNC)	5	6	3	14
6th	532	John Coppenhal	Hunts	6	-10	7	3	-9	16
7th	400	John Sturgeon	Hawley Lake	7	-11	(DNC)	5	7	19
8th	821	Clive Chapman	Shearwater	5	(DNC)	9	9	-13	23
9th	614	Carol Butcher	Hawley Lake	(DNC)	9	(DNC)	8	12	29

Western Aphelion 2014									
	Sail	Helm	Club	Sutton Bingham	Severn	Mudford	Merthyr Tydfil	Bristol & Avon	Net
1st	804	Eddie Pope	Ogston	1	1	1	-2	-2	3
2nd	800	Henry Jaggars	Beer	3	2	-5	1	-7	6
3rd	869	Bob Dodds	Crawley Mariners	2	(DNC)	3	(DNC)	4	9
4th	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield	4	-5	2	4	-5	10
5th	597	Ben Palmer	Baltic Wharf	-5	3	4	3	-6	10
6th	532	John Coppenhall	Hunts	(DNC)	6	(DNC)	5	1	12
7th	701	Izac Dodds	Crawley Mariners	6	(DNC)	7	(DNC)	3	16
8th	821	Clive Chapman	Shearwater	8	(DNC)	(DNC)	6	9	23
9th	358	Mick Parnell	Bristol & Avon	(DNC)	12	(DNC)	10	8	30

Northern Aphelion 2014								
	Sail	Helm	Club	Winsford Flash	Attenborough	Staunton Harold	Redesmere	Net
1st	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield	2	-4	2	1	5
2nd	804	Eddie Pope	Ogston	3	1	-6	2	6
3rd	869	Bob Dodds	Crawley Mariners	1	(DNC)	7	3	11
4th	864	Peter Mountford	Staunton Harold	5	5	5	-6	15

Eastern Aphelion 2014								
	Sail	Helm	Club	Fishers Green	Crawley Mariners	Chipstead	Up River	Net
1st	869	Bob Dodds	Crawley Mariners	3	2	1	(DNC)	6
2nd	84	Michael Ettershank	Up River	4	-6	4	1	9
3rd	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield	2	4	-8	4	10
4th	711	Brian Welham	Maidenhead /	5	3	5	-7	13
5th	400	John Sturgeon	Hawley Lake	-9	5	6	6	17
6th	701	Izac Dodds	Crawley Mariners	7	8	7	(DNC)	22

Central Aphelion 2014								
	Sail	Helm	Club	Hunts	Frensham Pond	Cransley	Baltic Wharf	Net
1st	804	Eddie Pope	Ogston	4	(DNC)	1	1	6
2nd	84	Michael Ettershank	Up River	3	5	3	(DNC)	11
3rd	867	Chris Robinson	Burghfield	2	(DNC)	8	4	14
4th	800	Henry Jaggars	Beer	6	2	(DNC)	7	15
5th	597	Ben Palmer	Baltic Wharf	(DNC)	3	6	6	15
6th	532	John Coppenhall	Hunts	5	(DNC)	5	5	15

Editorial

Hi,

By now everyone should know what **perihelion** stands for from the achievement of the European Space Agency in landing on the Comet P67Churyumov-Gerasimenko. However, if you don't know then it's the point on a Comets orbit that is closest to the sun. I have put a drawing of the lander in this issue.



The photos and the report I got from the Staunton Harold Open were excellent and include the Front Cover photo of Michael Etershank crossing the finishing line to secure the overall win in race 3. I did suggest to Michael earlier in the year that his sails had seen better days and this win and a high place in Barts Bash certainly show what a new sail can do. My experience over the years has been that a new sail usually means a higher finishing position and often a win at the first open! This could be the sail or it could be a physiological advantage!

We are getting less Open meeting reports to put in here but this issue we have a report of the Nationals from a different aspect from Steve Gregory with some excellent photos. Guy Wilkins has given us some views on sailing the 3 rigs without differentiating them. He and I would be very interested in any comments or expansions of his views. Not only is Peter Mountford a co-author of the Staunton Open but has given us some thoughts on wearing helmets. My view is that before I give up sailing every weekend we will all be encouraged to wear helmets or even forced to. What do you think?

Brian Welham C711

Stop Press

Comet Class Association desk calendar for 2015 now available. Price £4.

Also available are dark blue baseball caps with the Comet logo at £7.

Call Liz e-mail: lizhossell@hotmail.com

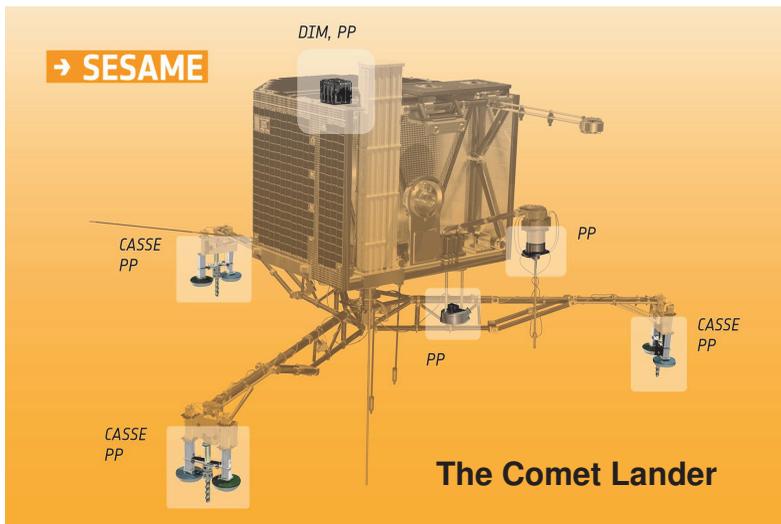
Comets in Barts Bash

I have been looking at the records of Comets in Barts Bash and would like to congratulate all the helms and clubs who arranged for Comets to participate. There were 111 Comets sailed on September 21st in the biggest handicap race ever staged.

There were 1278 different classes of boat competing of which 200 classes had more than 10 boats in the race. The 111 Comets put us 33rd in popularity (Laser with 1661 helms were 1st with Optimist and Laser Radials 2nd and 3rd) Comets were sailed at 38 clubs which makes us the 23rd most popular class.

Thank you and congratulations to all those who took part. If any of the helms sailing Comets sailed at your club are not members of the Class Association then please encourage them. You could copy the renewal form in the centre of this issue and give them a copy with our congratulations for promoting the class.

Ed



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Brian Welham St Neots, Cambridgeshire, 01480 534624 bwelham@sky.com

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email theweatherleys@btinternet.com

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