

PERIHELION  **110**



**Spring
2014**

Comet Class Association Newsletter

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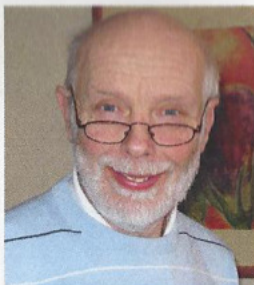
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Chairman's Report

Hello All

Welcome to everybody and especially our new Comet members.



I notice we have a new PY number of 1196 which means the Comet is getting slower in regards to handicap racing. (I can hear the groans already in my club.) This makes our Comet even more competitive.

The new sailing season is upon us. The sun is shining and I can't wait to get back on the water. I've washed the boat and all the sheets. Oiled all moving parts and checked that all screws were up tight. T cut was used to spruce her up and she was looking great. I glanced at the mast step and to my horror it had disappeared! If I had put the mast in it would have gone right down to the hull. A phone call to Andy Simmons was hastily made and now alas C704 is temporarily out of commission. Thankfully C821 is ok so I will sail her until an effective repair is made. The moral of all this is to be kind to your boat and check her over at regular intervals.

Before the Opens get underway I wish to make a plea to a minority of helms who seem to rock and roll their boats around a course in such a way as to gain an advantage. In plain English they cheat.

- Repeated tacks or gybes unrelated to changes in the wind.
- Pumping of the sails in such a way as to propel their boat forward.
- Movement of the body so as to ouch the boat forward.
- Sculling: repeated movement of the helm.

I have deliberately not put in all the relevant passages from the Sailing Rules 42.2 but one I will quote under Fair Sailing. "A boat and her owner shall compete in compliance with recognised principles of sportsmanship and fair play"

Comet racing is great fun and I don't wish our class to suffer the fate of other classes where cheating is endemic and the only way to keep up with the leaders is to what they do.

Last year I was extremely pleased to see some of our young helms ably competing. I sincerely hope that they will be favourably influenced by the fair racing and boat handling of our leading helms. If you see someone cheating, tell them and if necessary protest them. Yes I said protest them! Turning a blind eye condones it.

Staunton Harold is the venue for the Association Championships and Bewl Valley the Nationals. Two great venues both of whom boast outstanding expanses of water (and no weed)!

Norah is to be congratulated in generating another excellent fixture list. Twenty three Opens plus the two Championships. We must be the envy of many Dinghy classes. Sadly we have lost two very supportive clubs in Banbury and Chester, but I am looking forward to sailing at Bristol and Avon.

Fishers Green is the first Open and it is to be enjoyed weed free.

Don't forget to encourage helms in your club to travel to at least one Open in your area. Double points gained for the Traveller's plate. (Can any club stop Crawley Mariners winning it again?) If you have never sailed an Open try one this year. You will be made very welcome.

A few members of your Committee are in the process in organising an update of our website. This is to allow us to showcase ourselves more effectively. We plan to have a Members area, which in the future will be used to publish the Perihelion. (Some of the money kindly donated by the Hossell's will be used to pay for this).

Enjoying your Comet comes in many forms. Some helms just wish to cruise others like the challenge of racing. Whatever "rocks your boat" enjoy the year. Like you, I look forward to many warm days of sailing with blue skies and fair winds. I wonder how many we will get this year!

Clive Chapman C704 & C821

Secretary's Report

Notes from the committee:

1. Once again the Comet season has started early, with Fishers Green and Hunts kicking off with an enjoyable weekend, followed by Shearwater and Sutton Bingham.
2. The weather for the Bloody Mary was kinder than in recent years. Well done to the Comet helms who took part. Ian Stone did particularly well, although he was sailing his Laser.
3. Your Committee met in February and agreed to use some of the donation from Phillip Hossell to re-design the website. Clive Chapman, Michael Ettershank, John Sturgeon and Brian Welham have agreed to have this set up by the end of June – so, watch this space! The new website will integrate with Perihelion and we will monitor the impact this has on you, as well as on the costs.
4. We talked about Comet No.1 – Numero Uno – and have decided to ask you for 5 volunteers to sail her at the Association Championships. You would sail her for one of the races, and we will amend the Sailing Instructions to ensure that your entry status wouldn't be compromised.
5. Paul Hinde told us that a total of £262.60 was raised for Cotswold Hospice Care last year. Thank you all.
6. The National Championships for 2014 will be held at Bewl Valley Sailing Club on Friday 29th, Saturday 30th and Sunday 31st August. This is a departure from our usual time over the Bank Holiday weekend, so we hope that it won't cause too many problems for you. We are delighted that Bewl has invited us back as we enjoyed the event there a couple of years ago.
7. The Annual General Meeting will be at Bewl Valley SC on Saturday 30th August 2014 at 1730 or 1 hour after the end of the last race, whichever is later.



8. The Association Championships will be at Staunton Harold SC on Saturday 24th and Sunday 25th May. Most of you will have sailed at Staunton Harold and will know that it is a lovely stretch of water. There are several National Trust properties nearby, as well as good walks and shopping facilities which may interest your support crew.
9. The Committee has agreed the provisional Aphelion areas for this year, and you will find the details elsewhere in the magazine. At the time of writing I am still in discussion with a couple of other clubs, so we will send out the final programme as soon as we can, as well as putting it onto the website. Last year we set up a Club Trophy which encouraged newcomers to the circuit. It appears to have been successful, albeit a mathematical nightmare, according to Paul, and we will run it again this season.
10. We're sorry not to be going to Banbury or Chester this year. Both clubs have provided us with some super sailing over the years and they will be missed. Bristol and Avon Sailing Club have asked to hold an event for us, so please try to support them on Saturday October 4th.
11. Rhian Bevan and Helen Leivers have asked me to remind you about the Comet Facebook account. Do use it as a way of keeping up-to-date with events, find out who is planning to attend meetings, tips, travel plans, and much more.
12. Once again thank you to everyone who helped with our stand at the Dinghy Show, at the beginning of March. John Sturgeon did a great job of organising everything – thank you.
13. If your club is running an Open meeting, please ensure that someone writes a report on the day and that it is sent to Brian Welham to include in Perihelion. Some photographs will also be appreciated.

Norah Jagers Class Secretary

Builders Report

At last, Spring has sprung! At the time of writing (mid March) Snowdrops are beginning to fade, Daffodils are in full bloom and I'm beginning to see Primroses, all on my drive to work.



The Dinghy Show came and went, one of the Comets was sold to a young lady at Staunton Harold Sailing Club and was delivered on the way home to Devon. The other Comet is still available and can be had with any rig.

Once again, an impressive list of Open Meetings has been organised by Norah and I must try and visit some, I'll defiantly be at the Nationals at Bewl in August and also at the new meeting at Bristol Avon where I used to sail well over 50 years ago. I think I was in demand as a light wind crew in the days when a two man dinghy had to race with a crew, or not at all.

There is a 2014 Spare Parts List with this newsletter and it can be downloaded off our website: www.cometdinghies.com We have tried to keep our prices keen but standard and Mino sails had a small increase. The Xtra's and Zipper sails haven't gone up. Our current batch of standard sails has all gone but a new batch is due in April.

Don't forget, if you're not sure about any of your rigging etc and you don't have a newish Comet at the Club to compare with, take some good pictures and e-mail them to cometdinghies@btconnect.com and I can have a look and let you know if anything's amiss.

Andrew Simmons



Comet stand at the Dinghy Show

This was taken during the setting up the combined Comet Dinghies and Comet Class Association stand at this years Dinghy Show. See page 21 for more info.

Perihelion 111

Please send your contributions for the next issue of Perihelion by

Friday 25th Jul 2014

To Brian Welham, Class Editor, 19 Lake End Way
Crowthorne Berks RG45 7LP e-mail bwelham@sky.com

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

Front Cover	Laurent Conte
Page 9	Brian Welham
Page 21 (both)	Brian Welham
Page 26 (all)	Brian Welham
Page 32 left	Brian Welham
Page 32 right	Paul Hinde

Buying a Used Comet?

We've recently been asked what a potential buyer should look at, so here are some suggestions:

Look at the hull to see if there are any obvious large repairs. Check underneath for scratching or evidence of having been "bounced" on a road trailer. Gel-coat cracking isn't usually a big problem as most will polish out, and the builder supplies repair kits in the appropriate colour for bigger chips.

If there's a keel-band, is it firmly attached? This is particularly important if the boat has been sailed off a beach.

The mast-step is one of the more vulnerable spots, so investigate inside, and look for evidence of twisting/gel-coat cracks around it. "Pour a cup of water into the mast step It should not drain away.

Look at the bailer. It should move easily. Beware of large repairs around bailer.

Check the rudder pintle - in older boats it sometimes comes loose and may need to be repaired. Hatches on the transom usually indicate a pintle repair. Not always a bad thing as it is the only way of getting the pintle area to do an effective repair.

Hatches on the fore seat area are useful and not a concern. A hatch on the foredeck is rare and would indicate mast step repair.

Obviously you'd look at the spars to see that they're straight and that the rivets aren't too corroded (easy to replace). Salt water usage can corrode fittings.

A sail for cruising or club racing can last many years but if you wish to race and compete regularly a new sail will need replacing at least every three years.

Is the boat cover in good condition? If kept outside they will need replacing every five years.

Does it come with a combi- trailer or just a launching trolley.

Find out from the vendor what the boat's been used for. A boat which has been raced hard every week at a variety of clubs for 10 years is likely to have more battle scars than one which has used once a month at the home club. The vendor should be able to give you the log book which, if completed correctly, will give you a history for the boat and its owners.

Last, and not least, take a Comet sailor with you when you go to look at the boat, if you can!

Clive Chapman & Norah Jagers

Belated Thoughts on Fishes Green

We visited the Nationals held last year at Fishers Green and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon. Before leaving Clacton, I had gone over to the Gunfleet and watched the morning race which was held in dull conditions of a full Force 4 with wind against tide and it looked very hard work up the beat through the short chop.

Imagine the contrast when we arrived at Fishers Green to see lovely sunshine gleaming on the blue water with a light breeze blowing. I thought just how lovely it looked with boats all over the course and I found myself wishing that this was still my normal type of sailing water!

Then, I saw boats stopping dead, helms leaning over the rudder or getting their boards up – it could only be the dreaded weed and I began to change my mind. Actually, weed is an even more effective method of stopping the boat than a three foot chop and, worse, you can't see it coming. Of all the problems of racing, I often thought weed to be the most infuriating and, of course, it always grabs you at the worst possible moment – that tack to cover someone brought to a sudden halt!

Well, I know that it is always the same for other people but I began to realise that home water is still the best and I'll stick with the Wallet seaway at Gunfleet. Seriously, it was great to see such a good fleet on the water and to meet so many old friends at such a hospitable club.

I hope the new season goes well for all of you.

Keith. Lamden

Down Wind Sailing in a Comet ***MORE HELP DOWNWIND*** ***IN EMERGENCY***

With Brian's approval, I would like to add to his article on downwind sailing. What he said would help keep you out of trouble as it balances boat speed against stability in normal conditions. However, there'll come a time when, due to sudden gust, shift or wave, the worst happens and a trick may be the answer to a full loss of control with a dunking.

It's all down to inertia and I do not mean the problem of finding Committee members or newsletter items! I mean inertia due to motion and the fact of momentum continuing it's original path after a change has occurred. Think of the force on your body when a vehicle accelerates or slows rapidly or goes round a sharp corner – that's due to inertia.

At slower speeds, the effects are less obvious but the physics still apply even in a dinghy. Try sailing your Comet downwind with the sail set and your position holding the boat dead upright and then, suddenly without any other change, just firmly luff or bear away hard. The boat tries to keep moving on the original path before responding by heeling sharply to leeward for a luff and to windward when bearing away. That response is simply due to inertia.

Incidentally, this explains why you should not attempt to luff when already heeling to leeward or to bear away when already heeling to windward. Inertia just adds to the heeling effect and makes a capsize more likely – just try it on the water if you do not believe me!

However, these properties can be used in a reverse manner to assist you recover when Brian's advice is not enough and the water beckons. At this point, the boat reacts so quickly that

there may not be time enough to reset the sail or adjust your position to regain your poise. So-

If the boat suddenly heels to windward, luff up sharply and hard. If the boat suddenly heels to leeward, bear away sharply and hard.

Sharply is needed before the rudder loses all its' effectiveness and

Hard is needed to generate enough inertial effect in time.

In the first case, inertia makes the boat heel to leeward and, in the second, it makes the boat heel to windward and both reactions help restore equilibrium but it is key to bring the helm back centrally as soon as the mast moves back towards vertical. We used to call it 'keeping the boat under the mast' (or the sail over the hull) but, whichever, it is inertia at work and it does!

Keith Lamdin.

I have just re-read this message from Keith and realise that I have been doing just that when trying to stop those sudden heels on the down wind leg. I have always told people that you **do just the opposite to what seems sensible** the most common problem is the heel to leeward which you would think is best accommodated by letting the boat round up to windward except that it often ends in a capsize as the boat comes round to square with the wind and what you thought is the "safe" option proves to be just the opposite! Thus to keep the boat up right you steer away from the wind until the heeling goes away and you can resume your steady downwind course. As Keith has says if the boat heels to windward you turn towards the wind. To me this seems more natural. I think the most important message we get from Keith is why it happens which is always the first step in counteracting and preventing its occurrence.

Ed

Down Wind Sailing in a Comet

More help from Annette

Just read your article on death roll avoidance (I still manage to nose dive & death roll at times in heavy wind even with the kicker, outhaul & downhaul fully on; wimp knot fixing sail at about 60 degrees; centreboard fully down & sitting as far back as poss.) but I thought I mention its not impossible to dry capsizes, I've used 2 methods. They took a lot of trial & error to suss out the timing for & the 1st is a lot more undignified then the usual dry capsizes or walking along boom method but I can now do it with reasonable consistency. Would only recommend the 2nd method if your light though (even I almost turtle doing it) & you have to be really quick, I only try it if I've mucked up the timing on the 1st method.

I quizzed her on the methods she used and got the following. Ed

I was debating describing the technique but I didn't want to ruin any spectator sport by suggesting an alternative to a dunking! However, as I suspect it wont make much difference here's both methods for you to try at your leisure. You have to be pretty fast & the chance of a good outcome seems to inversely correlate with the extremity of any simultaneous nose dive. I also suspect being a light weight helps a lot with method 2.

Method 1: stand up as soon as death roll inevitable, position self on curved bit of side & jump up as high as you can, don't forget to dodge the boom if it swings over! If you hit the timing right you land an undignified, but dry, belly splat on the opposite boat rim (if not you either slide head first over the hull or rebound off the side), swing leg over quickly to stand on centre board before mast sticks in mud & manually swing the boom over if it hasn't already tried to decapitate you.

Method 2: not really got the hang of this. If you've left it too late for method 1 you can attempt to jump over to the mast base instead & scrabble up the nose along the side of the boat to the centre board. I usually find the boat starts to turn under too quickly to make it but I have done it once

If you do make it over, **don't forget the double splat effect!!**

No selfies I'm afraid, though there are probably a few embarrassing mid-action shots floating around courtesy of the clubs ever supportive camera (rescue) crew.

Annette Walter C393

NOTICE OF RACE

Comet Association Championships

24th-25th May 2014

RULES

- 1.1 The regatta will be governed by the rules as defined in *The Racing Rules of Sailing*. Competitors should note that Staunton Harold Sailing Club and the Comet Class Association implement the RYA Racing Charter and that they will be required to undertake to sail in compliance with the Charter, which can be found at the front of the RYA rule book (Racing Rules of Sailing 2013-2016).

2 ELIGIBILITY AND ENTRY

- 2.1 The regatta is open to boats of the Comet class (with standard, Xtra or Mino rig) whose helms are members of the Comet Class Association at the time of the event. Boats must be free of killer shrimp.
- 2.2 Eligible boats may enter by completing the entry form and sending it, together with the required fee to Dave Waymont, 8 Priory Road, Loughborough, Leicestershire LE11 3PP by 9th May 2014.
- 2.3 Entries after this date will be accepted but there will be no discount on the fee.

3 FEES

- 3.1 Required fees are as follows:
£25 (£20 for entries received by 9th May 2014)
Cheques payable to Staunton Harold Sailing Club

4 SCHEDULE

- 4.1 Registration:
Day and date Saturday 24th May 2014 From 8.00am to 10.30am
- 4.2 Dates of racing:
24th-25th May 2014
- 4.3 Number of races: 5 Races
- 4.4 The scheduled time of racing on Saturday 24th will not be before 11.00am and not before 10.30am on Sunday 25th May

5 SAILING INSTRUCTIONS

The sailing instructions will be available in April at the SHSC website www.SHSC.org.uk >Sailing>Open-Meetings

6 VENUE

SHSC, Melbourne, Derbyshire. DE73 8DL

NOTICE OF RACE

7 SCORING

- 7.1 The Low Point System of Appendix A will apply with A9 replacing A4.2.17.2
- (a) When fewer than four races have been completed, a boat's series score will be the total of her race scores.
- (b) When from four to five races have been completed, a boat's series score will be the total of her race scores excluding her worst score.

8 NOMINATION OF RIG

Competitors shall nominate on the first day of the regatta which type of rig they will use (standard rig, Xtra rig or Mino rig) before racing. A Competitor shall use the same type of rig for all races.

9 STATEMENT OF RISK

Rule 4 of the Racing Rules of Sailing states: "The responsibility for a boat's decision to participate in a race or to continue racing is hers alone."

Sailing is by its nature an unpredictable sport and therefore inherently involves an element of risk. By taking part in the event, each competitor agrees and acknowledges that:

They are aware of the inherent element of risk involved in the sport and accept responsibility for the exposure of themselves, their crew and their boat to such inherent risk whilst taking part in the event;

They are responsible for the safety of themselves, their crew, their boat and their other property whether afloat or ashore;

They accept responsibility for any injury, damage or loss to the extent caused by their own actions or omissions;

Their boat is in good order, equipped to sail in the event and they are fit to participate;

The provision of a race management team, patrol boats and other officials and volunteers by the event organiser does not relieve them of their own responsibilities;

The provision of patrol boat cover is limited to such assistance, particularly in extreme weather conditions, as can be practically provided in the circumstances;

10 INSURANCE

Each participating boat shall be insured with valid third-party liability insurance with a minimum cover of Two Million Pounds Sterling per event or the equivalent.

11 FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information please contact Dave Waymont, 8 Priory Road, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3PP dave.waymont@live.co.uk
Tel: 01509 563123 Mobile 07779 697789

2014 Dinghy Show at Alexandra Palace



This year we again joined Comet Dinghies at the 2014 Dinghy Show although the CCA did not show so there were no Duos, Trios or Versas on the stand. We had lots of interest from potential Comet sailors and were visited by many of the old faces.

The stand showed a new std rig with the zippered sail waiting for a buyer and a red hulled Xtra 877 with her new proud owner

Mrs Julie Hudson who now has it at her Staunton Harold Club.

As you can see from the photo on page 10 we were helped by lots of members including John and Sue Coppenhall, Brian and Dee Weatherley, Bob Dodds, Ben Palmer, Malcolm Underwood, Brian Welham and others. John Sturgeon again did a great job in organising the stand but unfortunately could not be there and Henry Jagers did his usual brilliant job of providing great pictures with the help of Norah's photographic talent.

We were also visited by Ian Coppenhall, an old multi-years National, Association and multi Aphelion Champion who was working at the show for Laser. *(well he's not that old really!)*

Ed

COMET ORBITAL & APHELION

Trophy series 2014

Rules for qualification and scoring

Orbital and Aphelions

All 3 rigs are eligible for these trophies. However helms cannot change rigs during an open meeting or a championship but can use different rigs for each open or championship. At each open meeting the finishing positions are determined by the host club. The CCA will remove all non CCA members and recalculate the positions for use in the Orbital and Aphelion results.

Orbital

To qualify for a position and a memento for this, our overall travellers' series, you need to **enter a minimum of six events**. This must include open meetings from **at least two of the Aphelion areas and either or both of the) National or Association Championships**.

Your six best overall results (from opens and championships) will be used to determine your Orbital position.

Ties will be broken by the most 1sts, 2nds, 3rds, etc. in those six best results. Ties remaining after this will be broken by the better place at the National Championship or failing that by the better place at the Association Championship. It is hoped to present the trophy, prizes and mementoes at the Redesmere Open meeting

Aphelions

To qualify for a position and a memento for an Aphelion, our regional travellers' series, you must **enter a minimum of three of the open meetings** designated for that region. You may compete in any or all of the areas. Your three best overall results from a region will be used to determine your position in that region.

Ties will be broken in favour of the helm with the most 1sts, 2nds, 3rds, etc. in their best three results. If a tie remains it will be broken by the best place nearest the end of the series. It is hoped to present the trophies, prizes and mementoes at the final venue in each region.

Cancelled events

If one or more of the scheduled events in a region is cancelled then all of the competitors in that Aphelion will be awarded average points for those events. This will be an average of their finishing positions from the events that they have attended in the affected Aphelion.

COMET APHELION

Opens and Regions 2014

Northern

Sat 10 May Winsford Flash
Sat 21 Jun Attenborough
Sat 18 Oct Staunton Harold
Sat 25 Oct Redesmere **-Prizes**

Southern

Sat 12 Apr Shearwater
Sat 26 Apr Burghfield
Sat 3 May Maidenhead
Sat 5 Jul Hawley Lake
Sat 27 Sep Cotswold **-Prizes**

Eastern

Sat 5 Apr Fishers Green
Sun 8 Jun Crawley Mariners
Sat 14 Jun Chipstead
Sun 13 Jul Up River **-Prizes**

Western

Sun 13 Apr Sutton Bingham
Sun 10 Aug Mudeford
Sat 6 Sep Severn
Sun 21 Sep Merthyr Tydfil
Sat 4 Oct Bristol and Avon -
-Prizes

Central

Sun 6 Apr Hunts
Sun 22 Jun Frensham Pond
Sat 2 Aug Cransley
Sun 28 Sep Baltic Wharf **-Prizes**

This year there are 22 Open meetings in 5 Aphelion areas. To qualify for a regional prize you need to enter at least 3 events in that Aphelion. Your best 3 results will automatically be counted towards your overall place.

GJW Direct Sailjuice Winter Series

For many years several clubs have organised Open handicap events during the winter months, the best known among Comet sailors being the Bloody Mary. Over the past few years the results of these have been combined into a series, much like the Comet's Orbital traveller series.

I hadn't planned to do any of the series, apart from the Bloody Mary, but Nigel Austin suggested the Oxford Blue. This was a new event at Oxford Sailing Club the weekend before the Bloody Mary. I hadn't sailed at Oxford since university, so racing there as a warm up for the Bloody Mary seemed a good idea, and I entered. Nigel then persuaded me to try the Steve Nicholson Memorial Trophy at Northampton Sailing Club too, so I ended up doing these three events along with Nigel.

Oxford Blue

For the Oxford Blue three races were planned back-to-back, which sounded rather exhausting. However, I reckoned the races would have to be short in order to be finished before it got dark, so as long as it wasn't too windy I should be OK. The weather forecast was for gales the day before and after, but a lull for the event itself. I got up on the Saturday, to find it raining hard and the wind blowing – not a good start. I arrived at the club early, just before Brian and Dee Weatherley with their Comet Race. We were just about the only people there, but managed to find our way up to the unloading area. By this time the rain had eased, and we got the boats rigged. Each boat was issued with a GPS tracker, which allowed the spectators to see what was going on from within the comfort of the clubhouse.

There were 116 entries, and the fleet was split into two – fleet 1 included the Comet Race and everything faster, while fleet 2 consisted of the Blaze and everything slower. The Comet was almost the slowest boat, with only the Laser 4.7 and RS Feva being slower. The racing would be lap timed handicap racing.

Launching proved to be straightforward, even with over a hundred boats launching at once, as there was a big launching area and the club ensured there were plenty of people to help. By the time we got onto the water it was still raining, but the wind had eased to a light breeze. Being the slowest boat was going to make the start difficult. Usually the aim is to get the best start possible from the favoured end of the line. You're then in clear air, and in a good position to keep in front. However, when all the other boats are faster, you're going to get caught and end up in dirty air, and a good start will only delay the inevitable. Therefore, I decided to go for a quiet area of the line to maximise the chance of clear wind. I watched the fleet one start, and they bunched at the committee boat end of the line, so the pin end seemed a

good place to start. However, fleet one had a general recall, and on their restart they bunched at both ends of the line. I therefore decided to start more in the middle. This proved difficult, as with the 'round the ends' rule in force I didn't want to be over the line. The committee boat wasn't visible due to the number of boats, so it was a bit of a guess where the line was. The gun went, followed by an individual recall, but I decided it wasn't me. I got rolled over by one boat, but was able to tack behind them into reasonably clear wind. I decided to head to the right hand side of the course as quickly as possible so that I would be on starboard coming into the first mark, which I expected to be crowded. Looking back I had a good lead on Nigel, the only other Comet, who had appeared to make a poor start at the committee boat end of the line, but was catching up fast.

By the time we reached the windward mark Nigel and I were firmly at the back, with only a group of Laser 4.7s a little further behind. Nigel got round the mark just ahead of me, and we started the downwind legs. With only a few boats behind us, and fleet one only just starting their second lap, we had clear wind, and the legs were straightforward and uneventful. By the time we got onto the last leg of the first lap, the wind had dropped further. The lead fleet one boat, an RS800, came up behind us, and the shorten course flag went up. But was it shorten course for fleet one, two or both? The flags were hanging limply, and we couldn't tell. I continued on until I could see the flags properly – it was a shorten course for fleet one only, so we would have to do another lap. I tacked for the next mark and sailed about thirty yards, and then the shorten course for fleet two went up! I immediately tacked back towards the finish, annoyed at having lost thirty yards.

We were among the first boats to finish, so had a long wait for the rest of the fleet. Unfortunately for our results, they got round pretty quickly. By this time the wind had dropped to nothing, and we were sent ashore for a break. By the time we got there the wind was already filling in again, and the start was set for thirty minutes time – a short break!

For the second start I opted to start a little down from the favoured pin end of the line. However, with the wind increasing, I sailed closer to the pin than I intended and got buried among the boats there. With thirty seconds to go I was on the line, but the boats to windward were sailing away. I decided to follow them, reasoning that if I was over I wouldn't be seen. Not surprisingly, we had a general recall! The restart was under a black flag, so everyone, including me, was cautious. The start was uneventful, and I started making my way over to the right hand of the course, although, bearing in mind my experiences of the first race, I didn't hurry. This paid off when the wind shifted, and I was lifted onto the lay line. The boats on the extreme right hand side of the course had to reach into the windward mark. This included Nigel, and as a result I had a good lead over him. By this time we had a good wind,

and were hiking on the beat. With our delayed start and increased wind, fleet one were already catching us, and this made keeping clear wind harder. By the end of the beat on lap two it was clear that the wind was easing, and at the first leeward mark I came across a group of fireballs rafted, and drifting to the wrong side of the mark. I couldn't understand how they managed to get in such a state until I sailed around the mark and stopped dead in no wind – now I knew! Nigel still had wind and came up behind us. The shorten course flag went up, but we still had half a lap to go in no wind. Eventually we got to the final leeward mark, but in a bunch of boats. I sailed around the outside of them, while Nigel found a way through close to the mark and got ahead of me. On the approach to the finish we again got caught up in a bunch of boats. As we crossed the finish line we couldn't tell who was ahead, and judging from the comments coming from the committee boats neither could they. This proved to be the case, as the final results gave Nigel and I an equal placing.

With the delays due to lack of wind, and the general recalls, there wasn't time for the third race, so we returned to shore to pack up.

Final Comet results were

Boat	Name	Race 1	Race 2	Overall
Comet	Nigel Austin	58	77.5	68
Comet	Chris Robinson	71	77.5	74
Comet Race	Brian & Dee Weatherley	100.5	73	91



These are from the Bloody Mary. Above - the mayhem when trying to recover 350 boats

Left - Maisie Gardiner as she photographed better than the others

Right shows the variety of competitors from Topper that we all know to the 30ft masted Thames A Raters

Bloody Mary

A week later we were all at the Bloody Mary, the biggest pursuit race in the country. This time we were joined by Mazie Gardiner, making three Comets. Ian Stone, the Comet National champion, also sailed, but in a Laser. Brian Welham came to spectate, and with Sarah Stone helped with launching and recovery – very helpful as the banks at Queen Mary are steep and with 324 entries, the two small jetties got very crowded. It was perfect sailing weather - a warm sunny day and a good breeze.

The Toppers were first to start, and there were over thirty of them. As their start approached, they appeared to be bunching near the committee boat end, and I could see the Race Officer brandishing the individual recall flag. However, in the last moments, they spread out down the line and had a clean start. The next big start was the RS Fevas and Laser 4.7s two minutes before the Comets and Fireflies. With only three Comets and four Fireflies on a line long enough to take over thirty boats there was plenty of space. The Comets elected to start at the committee boat end, while the Fireflies started at the pin end. I had the best start of the Comets, and when we met the Fireflies half way up the beat I was between the third and fourth Firefly.

Rounding the windward mark I couldn't see the next mark, which was somewhere downwind. The Fireflies were following the Fevas, who seemed to be pointing too high. I reckoned they were tacking downwind with their asymmetric spinnakers, and so took a more downwind route. This proved to be the right direction, and as a result I sailed straight to the mark and caught up with the Fireflies, who had sailed a longer route. We had another four reaches and runs before the next beat. By this time we were among the RS Fevas, but they didn't get in the way too much due to their tacking downwind. Nothing faster caught us until half way up the following beat, when a Solo, Streaker and Splash finally came through. This was about forty minute into the race, which was probably the longest time I've kept ahead of faster boats at the Bloody Mary.

The first two man boat to catch us was a National Twelve (the eventual winner) at the start of the downwind legs of lap two. By this time it was getting very congested on the water, particularly downwind where asymmetric boats were tacking downwind across non-spinnaker boats, and at the leeward marks, where the faster boats were catching the slower boats at the last moment and demanding water. I concentrated keeping out of trouble, and successfully avoided a couple of pile ups. On the reaches I kept low, which proved successful as the majority of the boats sailed high in an attempt to keep clear air and therefore sailed a much longer course. I was able to keep close to the rhumbline with clear wind. With the large number of boats sailing close by, I wasn't able to keep track of where everyone was.

However, I did see the International Moths sail pass on latter part of lap 2- that was lap 2 for us, but lap 1 for them! There was enough wind for the Moths to get up onto their hydrofoils, and they were going incredibly fast. At the end of lap two the leading Thames A Rater came through. These three man keelboats were huge! Their masts towered above even the largest dinghies.

The finish was now fast approaching. In addition to a finish line placed immediately in front of the winning boat – a line I've never reached, a number of finishing lines are set up at several marks of the course so that no one has too far to sail before reaching a finish. I sailed through a finish line about 20 seconds before the end of the race. Perfect – I now had fifteen minutes of extra sailing to the next finish line, which would give me the opportunity to catch a few Toppers just ahead, while the faster boats behind would finish and not be able to catch me.

Final Comet results were

Boat	Name	Position
Laser	Ian Stone	45
Comet	Chris Robinson	144
Comet	Nigel Austin	187
Comet Race	Brian & Dee Weatherley	200
Comet	Maizie Gardiner	245

Steve Nicholson Memorial Trophy

The next event was the Steve Nicholson Memorial Trophy at Northampton Sailing Club. There were the maximum 150 entries, and we were divided into three separate fleets – double-handed non-asymmetrics, single-handed non-asymmetrics and asymmetric boats. The non-asymmetrics sailed first, with the single-handers starting five minutes after the double-handers. The asymmetrics raced while we had lunch, and the afternoon racing was a repeat of the morning, giving two races for each fleet. It was warm, dry and a nice force two breeze promised a good days racing.

The course was put on the back of the committee boat, and then I realised that I didn't know where any of the marks were – no maps had been provided! However, as the Comet was one of the slower boats in the 58 strong fleet, with only three Laser 4.7s and a lone Topper slower than us, I guessed correctly that we would have plenty of boats to follow! The double-handers got off to a clean start, no doubt encouraged by the black flag that was used for all starts. I followed my strategy of aiming for a clear piece of the line, and with only a dawdling RS300 for company I started at full speed and in clear air. The RS300 sailed over the top of me a few moments later, but then it was straightforward sailing to the windward mark. I could see that

Nigel had started at the other end of the line – the Comet's red insignia really stands out! Although I appeared to have got a better start, Nigel quickly caught up, and rounded the windward mark just ahead of me. I hadn't quite realised how shifty the wind was, even on the big water. We rounded the mark with the Laser 4.7s and a Finn. Downwind I went low, which kept me in clear wind, while Nigel went to the other side of the course, and got pinned against the calmer shore by the Finn. This let me get past him, and I got up behind a Laser 4.7 and planned on his stern wave on the reach to the final leeward mark. Unfortunately, I overtook his wave and nosedived, and so started the second beat full of water. The double-handed fleet were now overtaking us, but while I went up the left hand side of the course, they seemed to prefer the right hand side. This was fine, until we converged on the windward mark, when I was on port to their starboard. Fortunately there was a large gap just as I arrived at the mark. At the end of the run the double-handers finished, and we were left to sail the last lap on our own.

We returned to the club for lunch while the asymmetrics sailed their first race. Returning to the starting area, we found the wind had increased. I watched the double-handers start, and their flogging sails drowned out the one minute and starting gun. They soon disappeared, leaving two capsized Enterprises on the line. Knowing I wouldn't be able to hear the start guns, I relied on my watch and started with no problems. This time I was ahead of Nigel at the windward mark, and the dead run passed without incident. By the second beat, the wind had increased further. The water was really choppy, and I found I had to sit back to keep the nose out of the water, just as if I was on the sea. The wind was fairly steady though, so I was able to sail with the mainsheet block to block and keep the boat flat by feathering into the wind. This enabled me to sail much higher than Nigel and keep ahead of him. However, near the windward mark a squall came through and almost put me into irons. I lost a lot of distance, and Nigel sailed past.

The downwind leg was now getting difficult. I sailed low into the most wind, and this allowed me to catch Nigel who had gone into the calmer area along the bank. Nigel gybed and sailed across towards me on a collision course. Keeping clear when you're only just under control isn't easy, but I was on starboard, so I left Nigel to worry about the keeping clear, and he shot past my stern. However, he was now in the stronger wind, while I needed to gybe to get to the next mark. I delayed as long as possible, hoping for a lull, but in the end I broached and wore round instead. Being involuntary the manoeuvre went badly, and I almost ended up in irons again. I was resigned to having given Nigel a substantial lead, but instead found that he had capsized and was completely upside down. I passed him and started the next lap. Just after I sailed through the finishing line the shorten course went up – the worst possible time, as I now had to sail another lap, while I

reckoned Nigel was far enough behind to be finished when he sailed through the line. The race was a lap timed race, and so unless I sailed the last lap faster than the first two he would beat me.

This wouldn't be easy, as the wind had increased further. I was tired too, and was really beginning to struggle to keep the boat upright and moving. There were plenty of boats capsized, so if I finished at least I'd get a reasonable position. I remembered Brian Welham's tip of raising the centreboard slightly, and this made things easier – I even overtook a Merlin Rocket! Although the beat was difficult, the dead run was even worse, as I couldn't get the boat to bear away without nose diving, and so resorted to a series of broad to beam reaches and wearing round instead of gybing. Progress was slow, and I ended up pushing a bit too hard and death-rolled just short of the leeward mark. The boat turtled, but at least I could ensure I righted the boat with the mast to leeward of the hull, and I was able to get back in the boat as it came up – just as well as I was probably too tired to get back into the boat from the water. The slow recovery also meant I had drifted past the leeward mark, so no more running either. I sailed the last reach to the finish.

However, even though I had finished the race, my sailing hadn't finished as I had to sail another beat just to get back to the clubhouse. Getting the boat off the water was difficult too. Two of us could only just hold the boat, even with the sail wrapped around the mast. We had to capsize it before we could pull it along the jetty to the shore, and I took the mast out before getting the boat onto the trolley. Then the wind really got up – a squall came through, accompanied by rain, thunder and lightning. The wind through the trees sounded like a train, and the visibility dropped to nothing, forcing the abandonment of the asymmetrics second race. I retreated to the clubhouse to get changed.

Twenty minutes later, the rain had stopped, there was a bright blue sky with a double rainbow and a pleasant breeze! In race two I was twenty ninth, out of thirty finishers. Nigel had retired after his mainsheet caught round the boom following his capsize.

Final Comet results were:

Boat	Name	Race 1	Race 2	Overall
Comet	Chris Robinson	41	30	32
Comet	Nigel Austin	43	DNF	45

Chris Robinson Comet 867

This tale of tenacity shown by Chris, Nigel, Brian, Dee and Maisie has put me to shame but as the years go on I am beginning to use my age as an excuse for staying on the shore in strong winter winds. But it was good to hear that my advice about raising the centreboard in very strong conditions has had some use. Well done to all who undertook this series of races. Have your own clubs decided to join in the Bart's Bash later in the year?

Ed

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Editorial

Hi,

This spring I intended to write about the history of some of the clubs that hold regular open meetings but so far I only have some info on my own club, Maidenhead SC so I will hold off until I get more from other clubs.

The lake we use at Maidenhead SC has been well served by the excess water this winter. As you can see from the photos the lake has overflowed its banks and flooded the Race Hut.



Maidenhead Sailing Club February 2014



Severn Sailing Club February 2014

This is where the web cam is run but we have had the water rise before and have ensured that the electrics are well above the water line so the camera has been in operation all the time. The Thames Valley was in the news a lot over the winter with the river, which flows through Maidenhead, overflowing its banks and creating lots of problems for the villages and lakes close to the river. However our "good luck" was not from river flooding but from the ground water level rising and now we can sail over the notorious *hidden island* without fear that the dagger board will hit the bottom.

In attending the winter committee meeting in February I was provided with this picture of the Severn Sailing Club house taken from the eastern side. As you can see other clubs were much more affected by the water than Maidenhead.

This is a busy time for me as, like John Windibank last year, I am upping sticks to East Anglia after 35 years in Berkshire and sailing at ICI Slough Sailing Club which became Taplow Lake SC and for the last 5 years with Maidenhead SC when Taplow had to close. I am hoping to join Hunts SC in St Ives where the Coppenhall family sail and also expect to attend a number of open meetings although I am not sure that it will be as many as John Coppenhall has managed over the last few years.

Please continue to send articles for me as it is very difficult to think up new topics without your input.

Brian Welham C711



COMET EVENTS 2014

7 months of Class racing!

Date	Aphelion	Venue
April		
5 Sat	E	Fishers Green
6 Sun	C	Hunts
12 Sat	S	Shearwater
13 Sun	W	Sutton Bingham
26 Sat	S	Burghfield
May		
3 Sat	S	Maidenhead
10 Sat	N	Winsford Flash
24 Sat	}	ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIPS at Staunton Harold
25 Sun		
June		
8 Sun	E	Crawley Mariners
14 Sat	E	Chipstead
21 Sat	N	Attenborough
22 Sun	C	Frensham Pond
July		
5 Sat	S	Hawley Lake
13 Sun	E	Up River
August		
2 Sat	C	Cransley
10 Sun	W	Mudeford
29 Fri	}	NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS & AGM at BEWL NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS
30 Sat		
31 Sun		
September		
6 Sat	W	Severn
21 Sun	W	Merthyr Tydfil
27 Sat	S	Cotswold
28 Sun	C	Baltic Wharf
October		
4 Sat	W	Bristol and Avon
18 Sat	N	Staunton Harold
25 Sat	N	Redesmere

Key to Aphelion areas:
 N=Northern; S=Southern;
 E=Eastern; W=Western; C=Central
 Final venue in each region is shown
 in bold, regional prizes and
 mementoes will be presented there.
 Orbital prizes, mementoes and end
 of season trophies will be presented
 at Redesmere.
Correct at 13th March 2014

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Contact Hilary Gilder email : hilarygilder@sky.com or 01457 512545

Comet 773

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This Comet has the Standard rig and the Mino rig.

It has had very little use and is in superb condition.

It has a cover and a launching trolley.

Couple of blemishes in the Gel coat. Pictures available if you contact me.

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£1395 o.n.o.

Contact Tom. Tel No 07856 751112

Wanted

Mino Sail for a new Comet sailor who has the Std and Mino spars but lacks a Mino sail. Please contact Richard Steptoe. Tel 077665 44367

Sail

I am very pleased to say I now have two sails for Comet 11 kindly given to me by a wonderful gentleman called Mick Cooper of Durham who has converted to the Xtra rig. I was amazed by his generosity and would love it if a small mention could be made online.

Angela



Comet Class Association
Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association