



# NEWSLETTER NUMBER 31 SUMMER 1994

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Front cover: Jake Sutton sailing his Comet 472  
at Frensham Pond, his home club.

(Photo: Anne Browning)



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Life I suppose is about choices. Some of us find decision making difficult and tortuous and others seem to breeze though life almost on instinct. We all chose the right boat though and we are lucky to belong to such a friendly Class of sailors. One thing's for sure, there's never any trouble about finding something to write about with the Comet Class, but somehow I've got to choose which topics to include and which to leave out.

At the time of writing I'm looking forward to travelling to Sutton Bingham and trying to make sense of the wind shifts there. The season to date has been a little on the cold side most of the time, but the winds have suited most of us and has led to some interesting racing with new names appearing on the winning list. Mark Wilkins started the racing season off for us with a magnificent 13th place at the Draycote Silver Salver and he was accompanied by a 26th from Errol Edwards and 39th from Henry Jagers.

The Open events have been very closely contested this year and new faces are appearing at the front of the fleets. Jake Sutton from Frensham Pond, last years National Junior Champion, was the winner at our first event at Shearwater and he also won at Red-ditch, finishing ahead of National and World Champions in the process. Jake now has two wins in the orbital series along with Guy Wilkins who won at Cam and Fishers Green. Nigel Ford recorded his first Comet win at Merthyr and Mark Wilkins, after dominating last years events, had to wait until his 4th event to record a win at Crawley Mariners.

Entries at our Open events are down so far this year apart from Crawley Mariners who have succeeded in bucking the trend with a magnificent 32 entries which included 15 visitors. Analysing the reasons seem to point to the fact that people are travelling less this year and a few of last years regular travellers are missing, which may account for the drop, but I understand that other classes are experiencing similar problems.

It was nice to see articles from our non-racing members in last months Perihelion and I endorse their comments about the qualities of the Comet for cruising. This is usually done on your own and is therefore not something that should be attempted by beginners or those a little unsure of their abilities. There are some magnificent sailing waters in and around the British Isles where the space, colours and views are heaven on earth. At the beginning of May this year I took Penny (Comet 555) up to lake Windermere and I enjoyed wonderful weather and sailing. The views from the centre of this magnificent water are quite stunning and the sense of freedom overwhelming. I was very lucky with the weather on my holiday, but large open stretches of water, especially those surrounded by hills, can have very sudden weather changes and one minute you could be becalmed with your feet dangling in the water and the next screaming across the lake on a force 5 gust and there's no rescue boat.

Open meetings and Championships are not just for expert sailors, they are for everyone to enjoy. We are very lucky to be invited by friendly Clubs and people to marvellous venues to race and

enjoy the events. Only one person on the day will win the racing but we all win by enjoying ourselves. The days are well organised and safe and are an ideal way to improve your sailing and meet people.

John Windibank

## FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

### WESTERN AREA

---

#### Shearwater

---

1 472 J Sutton  
2 357 M Wilkins  
3 565 R Smallwood  
4 534 J Regnard  
5 303 D Coleman  
6 436 N Gould

### EASTERN AREA

---

#### Cam

---

1 353 G Wilkins  
2 357 M Wilkins  
3 642 S Monks  
4 555 J Windibank  
5 532 J Coppenhall  
(only 5 entries)

### NORTHERN AREA

---

#### Chester

---

1 565 R Smallwood  
2 500 H Jagers  
3 508 M Smith  
4 274 P Hayes  
5 633 J Edwards  
6 (missing result)

#### Merthyr Tydfil

---

1 644 N Ford  
2 460 M Govier  
3 419 P Govier  
4 441 R Smith  
5 420 R Edwards  
(only 5 entries)

#### Fishers Green

---

1 353 G Wilkins  
2 472 J Sutton  
3 555 J Windibank  
4 357 M Wilkins  
5 188 S Thompson  
6 530 B Robson

#### Redditch

---

1 472 J Sutton  
2 572 D Degge  
3 500 H Jagers  
4 148 C Heaton  
5 347 K Woolley  
6 344 P Thompson

#### Sutton Bingham

---

1 657 M Wilkins  
2 353 G Wilkins  
3 472 J Sutton  
4 500 H Jagers  
5 (missing result)  
6 (missing result)

### SOUTHERN AREA

---

#### Crawley

---

1 357 M Wilkins  
2 353 G Wilkins  
3 555 J Windibank  
4 472 J Sutton  
5 530 B Robson  
6 573 A Reeve

#### Notes:

These results are those that count towards the Traveller's Trophies. Results accrued by sailors who are not members of the Comet Class Association are omitted.

The 3 missing results were not sent to the Editor

## SHEARWATER OPEN

Seven visitors from as far as Chipstead, Pingewood, ICI Slough and Frensham Pond S.C. joined 8 home Comets in the 3rd annual Club Comet Open. Sunshine greeted the visitors, with a gusty and veering force 3 - 4 SSW breeze, causing some interesting and at times frustrating racing. Mark Wilkins from Chipstead travelled down to defend his win from last year.

In the first race Tim Cross of Shearwater broke away from the fleet and led for several laps, hotly pursued by Jake Sutton from Frensham with Mark Wilkins closing hard. With half a lap to go Sutton took the lead to finish first, with Cross second and Wilkins third.

During the second race the wind became quite gusty and there were several capsizes. Sutton held a lead for the whole of the race, closely followed by Wilkins in second place and Richard Smallwood of Shearwater crossing the line in third place.

Sutton having two firsts, the final race was to decide 2nd and 3rd places overall, with several boats in contention. After some close racing, Cross passed the line first, followed by Wilkins 2nd and John Regnard from Shearwater in 3rd position.

Overall results:

1	472	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
2	395	Tim Cross	Shearwater
3	357	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
4	565	Richard Smallwood	Shearwater
5	534	John Regnard	Shearwater
6	303	Derek Coleman	Sutton Bingham
1st Lady	436	Nancy Gould	Pingewood

Nic Cross (Comet 418)

## PERIHELION

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in September 1994. Contributions to me by the end of August please.

How about a few more contributions next time eh? If you don't race, what do you do with your Comet? Perhaps OODs could give us rather more information about the remaining open meetings too.

Alan Browning.





Jake Sutton, winner at Shearwater and Redditch

Photo: Anne Browning

## CAM OPEN

Moderate to fresh Southerly winds greeted a fleet of Comets at Cam S.C. on April 24th for the first Eastern Region Aphelion Trophy race of the season, giving a long beat on the river course.

Guy Wilkins led from start to finish in the first race, with brother Mark just pipping John Windibank on the line by about 2 feet for second place. Guy had a bad start in the next race, being over the line, but he pulled through the fleet to take his second win.

There was a fine battle for first place in the third race, between Mark Wilkins and Steve Monks, with Monks taking the lead at the start. He was overtaken by Wilkins after the first round but regained the lead just before the finish.

### Overall Results:

1	353	Guy Wilkins	Chipstead
2	357	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
3	642	Steve Monks	Steeple Bay
4	555	John Windibank	Chipstead
5	532	John Coppenhall	Stamford
6	559	Jonathan Cole	Cam





Guy Wilkins, winner at Cam and Fishers Green



## FISHERS GREEN OPEN

As last year, the weather was good to us and there was a good turn out with 18 boats entering, but only four of these were from Fishers Green. I trust our visitors were glad to see that all our shallows have now been removed.

The first race was won by Jake Sutton (472), in second place was S.Conroy (517) who had borrowed my boat, but went home sick after his success, this was the first time he had sailed in a Comet. In third place was Guy Wilkins (353).

After lunch the second, shorter, race was won by Guy Wilkins, in second place Mark Wilkins (357) and third place was Jake Sutton.

The last race was led all the way by John Windibank (555) in second place Guy Wilkins and third was Bill Robson (530).

Overall positions:

1	353	Guy Wilkins	Chipstead
2	472	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
3	555	John Windibank	Chipstead

The first Fishers Green boat was 552 sailed by Roger Castle who came 13th overall.

So well done to all our visitors, and hope to see you all again next year when I hope to be well enough to compete myself.

Jenny Colclough (Comet 517)

## MERTHYR TYDFIL OPEN

Unfortunately only two visitors braved, what turned out to be, a rather pessimistic weather forecast for the weekend. This gave us a fleet of five Comets. Our fourth club owner, a Captain of somewhat larger craft, was sailing (?), using big engines, somewhere in the Caribbean - ooh!.

The sun shone and the wind gradually increased from a very patchy 0-2 southwesterly to a more steady 2-3 westerly for the last race.

The overall winner was Nigel Ford (324) of Chasewater Sailing Club with two clear wins in the first two races, each time managing to extract himself from the doldrums more effectively than the rest of the fleet. Second was Mark Govier (460) of Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club. Third was Paul Govier (419) of Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club with a victory in the final race. Fourth was Ralph Smith (441) of Clywedog Sailing Club and fifth was Roger Edwards (420) of Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club.

Mark Govier (Comet 460)

## REDDITCH OPEN

Redditch Sailing Club 4th Comet Open was held on the 14th May 1994 at Arrow Valley Lake, Redditch in bright sunny warm weather with very strong gusty winds.

The six entries were well down on last year, however the spectators, if not the entrants, had a very entertaining day. Every sailor, at some time during the afternoon, showed the spectators how to right a capsized Comet! However, the regular swimming did not detract from close entertaining racing with the final result not decided until the third race, as Debbie Degge from Redditch won the first race and Jake Sutton from Frensham Pond won the second, the last race was close run but Jake Sutton finished first winning the event overall.

### Results:

1	472	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
2	572	Debbie Degge	Redditch
3	500	Henry Jaggers	Staunton Harold
4	148	Clive Heaton	-
5	347	Ken Woolley	Redditch
6	344	Paul Thompson	Redditch

Paul Thompson (Comet 344)



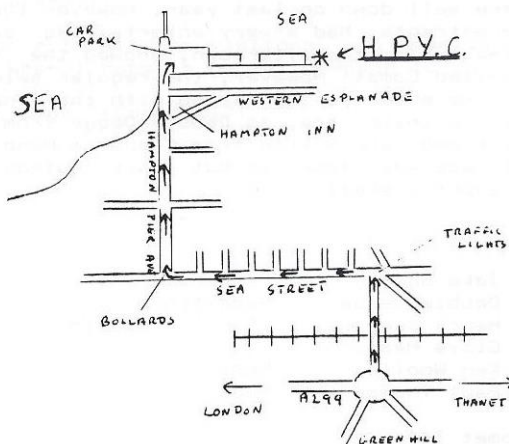
## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

July - Sept 1994

<u>Date</u>	<u>Club</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
3 July	Gunfleet	East	Richard Walker	0255 813150
10 July	Chasewater	North	Nigel Ford	0543 877718
24 July	Aylesbury	South	Rob Kerry	0442 873557
31 July	Seafarers	South	John Glover	0329 665408
3/4 Sept	Hampton Pier	TIDALS	John Finch	0227 712246
11 Sept	Stamford	North	John Coppenhall	0733 265789
18 Sept	Steeple Bay	East	Steve Monks	0277 821263
24 Sept	*Tamworth	North	Brian Cadman	0827 286470
end Sept	Welwyn (two-helm pursuit)		Richard Burnside	081 950 2406

How to get to the Tidal Championships, Hampton Pier

From motorway M2 take the A299, then:



## WELWYN GARDEN CITY S.C. 21st ANNIVERSARY

As an enthusiastic, some would say obsessive, supporter of the Comet, I read with great interest the exploits of Robin Davies (Comet 456) at Shearwater, mirroring as they do my own successes in Club Racing at Welwyn Garden City Sailing Club.

In the 1993 season I managed to win the Spring, Summer and Winter handicap points series silverware, together with the Spring/Summer Pursuit Series trophy. Added to the similar victories achieved in these races both in 1992 and 1991, this led to our club's highest accolade, that of 'Helmsman of the year' for the third time in succession.

At Welwyn Garden City SC we sail only mixed fleet handicap or pursuit racing which means not only very keen competition from the other members of the Comet fleet (we now have seven) but also from the Topper, Byte, Lightning, Solo, Enterprise, Wayfarer, Laser and International Moth classes. Average turnout is between 12 and 20 boats each Saturday morning.

This year is our coming of age; our 21st Anniversary, so there are numerous special events taking place, culminating in a special Commodore's Cup race, in which previous club commodores, together with present members, will do battle for the 'pot', supplemented with extra ballast of cake, and no doubt that lovely bubbly stuff. This is followed by our annual dinner and prize-giving. All this happens on 29th October, a date to look forward to.

We are a small club, who believe in good racing and good socialising and like all small clubs are actively seeking new members. Maybe you've never raced before, Welwyn Garden City is the place to start. The gentle inauguration into the joys of competition with a lighter side. Our commodore runs an "introduction to racing" informal course, to get you over the first, perhaps daunting, step when everything appears to be chaos, with lots of shouting. We're also hoping to encourage some of the "new sailors" from the RYA school, with whom we share the lake, to join us too, so if you need any further information please contact me, as below, or come along to Stanborough Lake, just off the A1M at Welwyn Garden City, Herts, any Saturday.

Finally I extend an invitation to all Comet sailors to participate in our one open race per year. That is the Punch Bowl Trophy Race to be held at the end of September (details to follow). This is a 3-hour pursuit race kicking off at 10 am. Two helms per boat are required, changing over every 3 laps of the course. It's great fun, especially if it's windy, and hugely enjoyable for both sailors and spectators alike, so come and see if you can lift our silverware - if you dare.

Richard Burnside (Comet 136)

19, Wayside Avenue, Bushey Heath,  
Hertfordshire, WD2 3SH  
Tel: 081 950 2406



## CRAWLEY OPEN

Bright sunny conditions and a light South-Westerly breeze greeted the 32 entries for the Comet open meeting held at Hedgecourt Lake on Sunday 15th May.

Guy Wilkins (Chipstead) took an early lead in the first of the three races followed by Simon Thompson (Crawley), Mark Wilkins (Chipstead) and David Forsdyke (Welwyn Garden City). The leading places remained the same until lap 4 of the 5 sailed when Mark Wilkins moved into second place ahead of Jake Sutton (Frensham Pond) and John Windibank (Chipstead). The final lap saw no further changes at the front with Guy Wilkins holding on to win.

David Forsdyke led the fleet at the start of the second race followed by Ian Beaumont (Crawley), Guy Wilkins and Mark Wilkins. By the end of lap 1 both Guy and Mark had moved ahead of Ian Beaumont and were chasing David Forsdyke. Guy took the lead on the second lap with Mark following him through a lap later and Jake Sutton moved up to third place ahead of Alex Reeve (ICI, Slough). The final beat saw Mark Wilkins pass Guy to take first place with Jake Sutton holding on to third place.

The third race started with Mark Wilkins taking an early lead from Keith Hiscock (Crawley) and John Windibank. Mark was caught out by fickle windshifts on the third lap allowing John Windibank and Jake Sutton to move ahead with Alex Reeve taking over fourth place. Mark Wilkins regained second place on the final lap but was unable to close on John Windibank who held on to win. In the final stages, Bill Robson (ICI, Slough) took third place and Alex Reeve moved ahead of Jake Sutton to take fourth place.

The overall results showed a clean sweep for Chipstead S.C. taking the first three positions.

### Overall Results:

1	357	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
2	353	Guy Wilkins	Chipstead
3	555	John Windibank	Chipstead
4	472	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
5	530	Bill Robson	ICI
6	573	Alex Reeve	ICI

Diana Thompson (Comet 50)

## CHESTER OPEN

Chester Sailing and Canoeing Club held their first Comet class open meeting on the river Dee on Saturday, May 21st and welcomed visitors from 6 clubs who joined with 5 boats from the host club to provide some excellent sailing for all competitors.

The blustery North Easterly wind was particularly difficult to handle resulting in some spectacular capsize downwind much to the delight of the gallery of onlookers in the clubroom.

Richard Smallwood showed everyone round the course in the first race to win from Henry Jagers, Mike Smith and John Edwards of Chester.

The second race was comfortably led by Jagers for over four and a half laps before an upwind capsize let Smallwood through to win from Jagers, Steve Hayes and Bryan Hardy.

Only 10 boats came to the line for the final race with the lower order of prizes still to be determined. The wind was, if anything, stronger and capsize were a common occurrence. After some positional changes during the race Jagers was first across the line followed by Smallwood, Pete Hayes and Phil Taylor of the host club.

### Overall results:

1	565	Richard Smallwood	Shearwater
2	500	Henry Jagers	Staunton Harold
3	508	Mike Smith	Redesmere
4	437	Bryan Hardy	Weaver
5	274	Peter Hayes	Redesmere
6	633	John Edwards	Chester

John Edwards (Comet 633)



## SUTTON BINGHAM OPEN

A warm sunny day, with light and variable force 1 - 3 Easterly winds, greeted the 15 competitors at the Comet Open meeting hosted by Sutton Bingham Sailing Club on Bank Holiday Monday.

John Windibank (555, Chipstead) led from the start from Guy and Mark Wilkins. There was close racing between the first three boats until the last lap when Windibank benefited from the wind shifts (see Chairman's report, Ed) and pulled out a commanding lead. The next two positions were close fought with the verdict going to Guy Wilkins, second, and Mark Wilkins, third.

In the second race, Mark Wilkins led from start to finish with a commanding lead. Jake Sutton and Henry Jaggers had a close race with Jaggers just pipping at the line.

Guy Wilkins led the third race for more than half distance before being overtaken by brother Mark who maintained his leading position to the finish. Guy finished second with Jake third.

### Overall results:

1	657	Mark Wilkins	(Chipstead)
2	353	Guy Wilkins	(Chipstead)
3	472	Jake Sutton	(Frensham Pond)
4	500	Henry Jaggers	(Staunton Harold)

## A COMET FLAT-TACK TRAINER

Getting away from my editorial duties for a moment, I would like to write something just as a beginner Comet owner.

My conscience has been pricking me because in Perihelion issue 26, page 16, I mentioned that I had planned to build a home training device to help me learn the skill of moving my weight out and in, in response to gusts. It has taken me more than a year to get going on this in earnest, partly because that original idea seemed too simple. Unfortunately, I still haven't finished it yet (beaten by my own deadline!) but here is a progress report which might be sufficient for you to make something similar if you want to.

### My flat-tack trainer

The first extension to the simple idea was to include tiller and mainsheet handling so that complete tacking could be practised at home, in particular I wanted to experiment with the "dagger" grip on the tiller extension. The design concept is complete and construction under way, and on the opposite page are scale drawings of it (figure 1). The trainer cannot roll - hence the name "flat-tack trainer", and it can only simulate tacks such as you might do in stronger winds.

The basis of it is two wooden boxes joined by a floor representing a 60 cm length of hull at about the middle of the cockpit. At the fore and aft ends there are boards, to get strength without a lot of weight, and two further boards, in a vee-shape, support the tiller hinge. A rod represents the tiller and fixed to that is a real tiller extension. The boom is also represented, because in tacking you have to pass under it smoothly. No details of construction are shown because I have made my trainer from what materials I happen to have around. The main item of luck was the acquisition of an 8 foot long piece of steam bent plywood (designed for boxing in water pipes etc). This came in handy for the curved part of hull under the knees. The rest is just available wood. An essential part of the design, and which increases the work no end, is that the trainer is designed to take to pieces into two boxes, two halves of the floor, two end boards, rudder support boards, tiller assembly and boom assembly. This is being done so that I can pack it away in a relatively small space at home and transport it too if necessary.

In use the trainer can be placed directly on the floor or on to an inch or two of foam plastic, to give the feel of a bit of windward heel. As well as tacking practise, it can also be used to get the feel of different angles of heel, by supporting one side high on tyres. The angle is easily shown by a Silva inclinometer.

### Roll-tack trainer

Over the past 5 years I have taken much video of Comets being sailed by sailors of widely differing ability and it is quite obvious that not only do the best sailors sit out further but they also use much more roll in the tacks and gybes.

So the next stage for my trainer is to include rolling as well. After doing some calculations to find out the sort of motion that the Comet does, and came to the conclusion that rolling as the old rocking chair does is not far off. This can of course be easily achieved by adding a curved base section (as shown dotted in figure 2). Unfortunately, just doing this would be hopeless for training because one needs considerable damping in the roll, in the real boat provided by the sail and dagger board. I am still pondering on the design of the damping device. There are two ideas going round in my mind, hydraulic damping, for which I have bought two car front wheel dampers, and pneumatic damping, a much simpler method involving air bags joined by a narrow tube. If anyone reading this can suggest a better damping method I would like to hear from them.

Alan Browning (Comet 361)

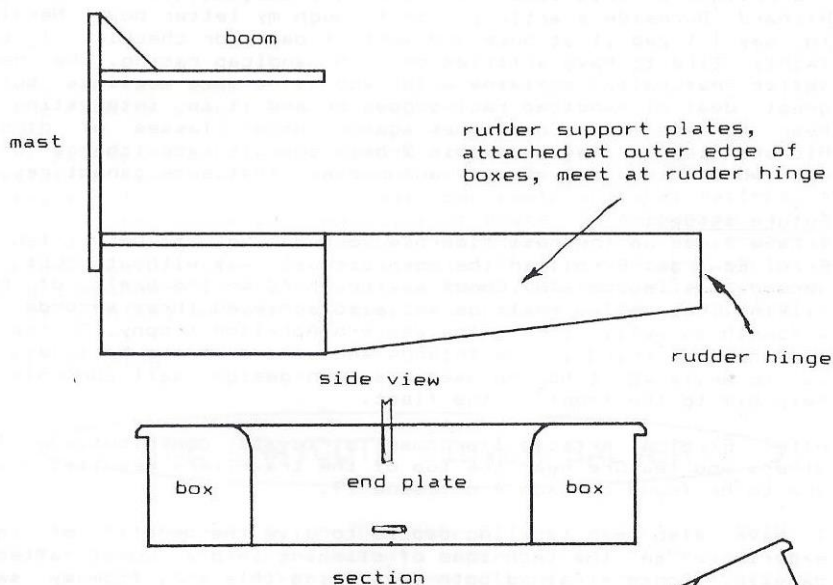


Figure 1

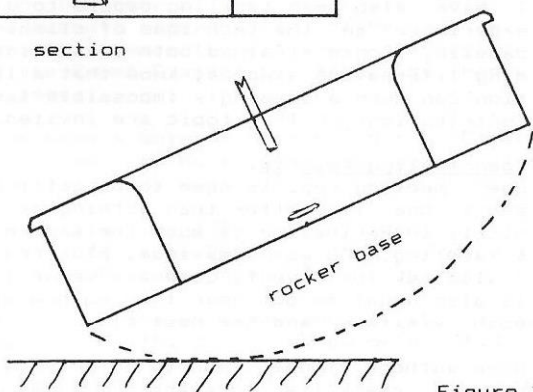


Figure 2



## EDITOR'S NOTES

### Contributions

I've not had so many contributions this time, so it's a thinner newsletter. There is no Racing rules clinic, because none of you has posed Keith a problem. Unfortunately, there is also no "Improve your racing" article either. In place of that I have put in an article of my own for the lower ranks like me, about an "on-land" training device which I mentioned in my "Raw beginner" articles. I don't count this in the "Improving your racing" series, but it could help somebody.

The delight of this issue for me is to have, on the deadline day, Richard Burnside's article flop through my letter box. Needless to say I typed it at once and sent it back for checking. I certainly like to have articles on club handicap racing. The newsletter naturally contains a lot about the open meetings but a great deal of handicap racing goes on and it is interesting to hear how well the Comet does against other classes of dinghy. Richard also invites us to his 2-helm pursuit race (change over, not two in at once!). Surely a fun event that some cannot resist.

### Future issues:

I have lined up the next "Improve your racing" to be written by Errol Edwards. Errol, in the open circuit, was without doubt our second most successful Comet sailor, hard on the heels of Mark Wilkins. He won two meetings and also achieved three seconds and a fourth as well, winning the Western Aphelion trophy. On top of that he came third in the Inlands and second in the Nationals. He is to write about how he uses his 'own-design' sail controls to help him to the front of the fleet.

After Errol's article I propose to invite contributions from others who feature near the top of the travellers results, names are to be found on page 4 of issue 29.

I have also been tackling people to give the benefit of their experience in the technique of climbing into a Comet after a capsized. I once strained both arms doing this and, from my swimming life-saving studies, know that a little bit of good instruction can turn a seemingly impossible task into a simple routine. Contributions on this topic are invited.

### Open meeting reports.

Open meeting reports seem to be getting shorter, but mind you a short one is better than nothing at all. The size that goes nicely in Perihelion is much the same as that asked for by Yachts & Yachting, 200 words maximum, plus results up to 6th place". Y & Y also ask for "event, date and venue in the first paragraph". It is also usual to put near the top how many boats there were, for both visitors and the host club.

Some authors of open reports do very well already, but if you do need a check list to spark off ideas to make your essay a bit longer, how about this:

a) say what the wind was like (force, direction, variations) and any other facts of that ilk (eg pelting with rain, sunny, low water level).

b) write three short paragraphs for the customary 3 races, not just with the finishing order but describing briefly how the race went, who led when and explain any clear causes of place changes (wind shifts, squalls, calm patches, penalties, capsizes etc).

c) blend in snippets of local interest (like that \*\*\*\* patch of calm behind the island at Pingewood). Snippets need not be strictly concerned with sailing, I'm sure some of the enjoyment derives from the mulled wine, cream buns or whatever.

d) don't bother too much with boat numbers and club names, putting those after every name in the text makes it less easy to read, and I will put these in as necessary. You don't always have to give full names every time, eg Guy Wilkins can be just Guy after the first time, if there is no ambiguity.

Also,

e) you can save some of my typing errors if you send a me a copy of the results sheet, some clubs do

f) by all means send a photograph or two, any size you like. The newsletter is black & white, so what they've got to have is contrast. I can't promise to put your photo in, what matters is relevance to the event, eg a lot of boats to emphasise a big entry (eg Kingsmead) or several capsized boats to emphasise strong blustery wind (eg Redditch and Chester). Posed shots of the prizewinners is really quite a good idea too, with the quality of printing we have now people can actually be recognised.

Alan Browning

## THE DRAYCOTE SILVER SALVER

The open event known as the Draycote Silver Salver was held on 26th March 1994. This is a pursuit race and took place in a wind that was light and flukey, There were 107 entries, representing 10+ classes of dinghy and the Comet Class Association was represented by 3 of our top sailors.

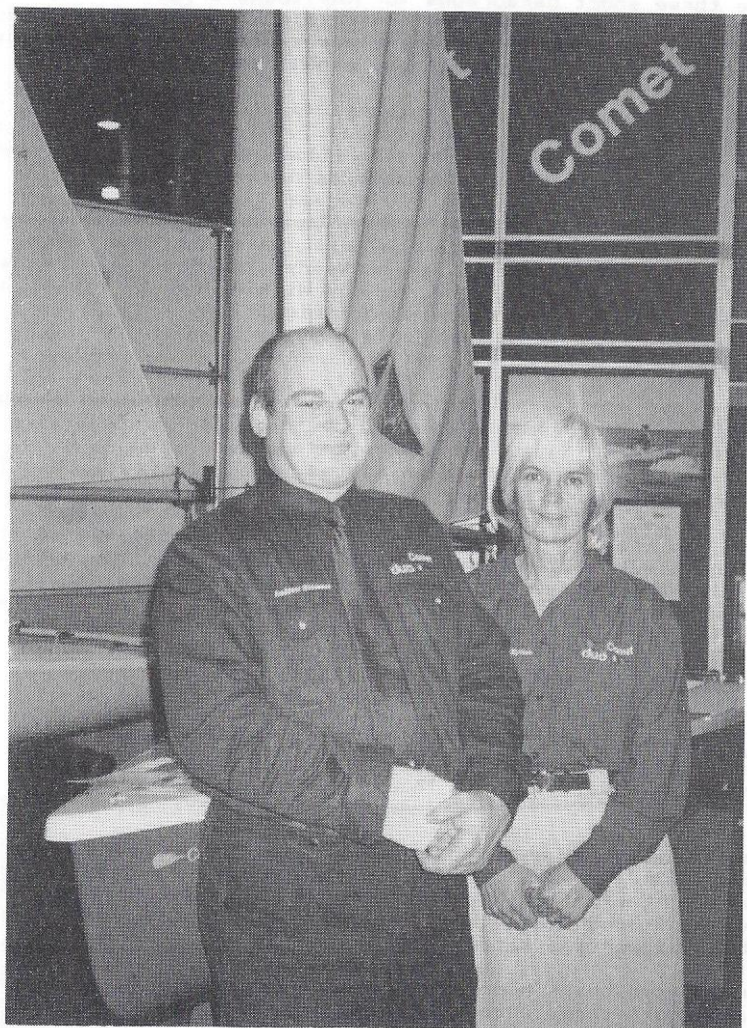
The first three boats home were a Solo, a Mirror and an Enterprise and next three were also Jack Holt designed boats. The Comet results were:

Mark Wilkins (357) came 13th  
Errol Edwards (334) came 26th  
Henry Jagers (500) came 39th

The Comet results lie well above the average, and it should be noted that no trapeze boat nor anything with wings or a sliding seat managed to get past Mark or Errol.

Errol Edwards (Comet 334)

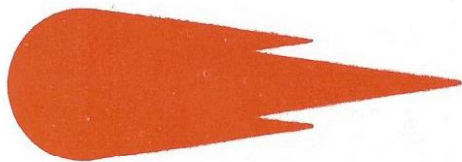




Andrew Simmons and Margaret Hylton  
at the London Boat Show, 1994

Photo: David Hudson





# **Comet Class Association**

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association