PERIHELION 34

Comet Class Association Newsletter

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 34
SPRING 1995

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Front cover: Derek Coleman (our Treasurer) at the 1994 Nationals

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The long dark winter is behind us once again and the daffodils are squelching their way into flower, the paint brushes are banished to the darkest regions of the garden shed and I'm more than ready for a sail.

Those long winter nights are very good for BT's profits as Norah has been more than tying up the loose ends of the sailing programme, she even had to untie a few knots first. Nevertheless I'm glad to say that if she had qualified, the Boy Scout movement would be pleased with her and in her usual efficient way we have another year full of great Comet sailing events.

Norah has put together a programme of 21 events with a welcome return to Sutton Bingham for the Inland Championship and the National Championship will be at a new venue for us the Sheppey Yacht Club. Guy Wilkins, Jake Sutton and myself reconnoitred the Club by entering their Master Freezer event in February and in spite of the cold weather we found a warm, friendly and efficient welcome. The club has good facilities with an indoor race viewing area and plenty of room for everyone. Full details of the Championship will be in the next issue of Perihelion, but if you want to book accommodation early the Club can provide you with a list.

Glossop Sailing club is a welcome new addition to our opens list and this has been placed in the Northern Aphelion Series. Sadly we are not returning to Steeple Bay or Gunfleet this year which leaves us with only two tidal events in this years calendar. We are not all avid Orbital junkies, but the clubs put in a lot of effort on our behalf when they put on an open event for us, so if you could support your local Open Events it will strengthen the Class and you will be sure of a warm welcome and an enjoyable day.

As I write the Exhibition season is in full swing and I would like to thank all the willing helpers who looked after the stands for us, Margaret Hylton's well oiled machine co-ordinated our effort as usual and produced the enjoyable and slick video. Henry Jaggers came up with another original work of art poster and Diana Thompson lent us her boat. Its always like an old boys reunion for me at these shows as ghosts of my past materialise for a few enjoyable hours.

Don't forget, you budding David Baileys out there, we are expecting great things and super posters for next year from your entries in the Photographic Competition and with all those cameras about I'll try an remember my comb!

Derek Coleman informs me that the money is rolling into the coffers of the class but unfortunately if you haven't paid you wont be reading this and all you will be receiving is a reminder instead, (not a fair swap).

Finally lets hope this is our best season to date and I hope I will see you in Orbit. Good Sailing.

John Windibank, Chairman

EDITOR'S NOTES

A non-racing issue

This issue is a rare animal, one dominated by non-racing contributions. There are lists of the racing events of 1995, but also articles on sailing in Spain, surfing, ice-yachting, sailing just for fun at Aylesbury and just one racing article, and even that has its major emphasis on the Christmas Spirit. There being a little space left over, I have dared to write something on the difficult topic of fluid flow.

Open meetings

You will find loose inserts for the open meetings at Cam, Chester, Merthyr Tydfil and at a new venue, Glossop in Derbyshire.

You will also find a loose insert extending an invitation for Comets to join in the Mudeford Week 1995. Last year's event was reported in Perihelion 33 by Ann Hooper and Glynn Jung, who enjoyed it immensely, and in that article an idea of the variety of boats taking part was given. in his letter to me Glynn says that those who know the area know that Christchurch is a very safe harbour, at the edge of the New Forest, containing the Hampshire Mude, Royalty Avon and the Dorset Stour. Two sides of the harbour are formed by the sandbank (5-6 berth Holiday Beach huts but no cars, and Hengistbury Head (no cars). The beaches run with unlimited access all the way to Sandbanks, Poole - 12 miles.

Comet Dinghies

In case anybody has missed it, the Comet builder, Andrew M. Simmons, has changed the name of his company from AMS Marine to Comet Dinghies. The address and all other company details remain the same.

Thanks

I made a little boob last September, booking in advance a holiday in early March (somewhere nice and warm). Because of this I have had to put the deadline a couple of days early and I would like to thank all contributors for sending me things that much earlier this time. I'll try not to do it again.

Future topics

In this issue I have included a couple of items on knots you could use on the Comet. It seems to me that the newsletter is an ideal forum for passing on tips, and they don't all have to come from Dinghy Leisure Services (Barrie Hylton). How about tips on transporting Comets, by someone who does it a great deal. Topping on a Mini ?, three boats at once ?, etc.

ANOTHER AUTUMN SAIL

It is the first week of December and, surely, the weather can not remain as mild as the record-breaking November? (Imagine, having records on Central England Temperatures since 1659, to one decimal place for every year since 1721 and this year, at 10.3 C, being the warmest of all!).

However, the blocking high remains to the east and a whole series of depressions are queuing up to the west and, with luck, that should mean a chance of my favourite southeasterly wind.

Monday to Thursday? No, poor winds with occasional rain make gardening and shopping the choice of Margaret, at least.

Friday? Yes, blue skies, sun and a force three southeasterly! Everything comes to he that waits and it's time to go sailing.

Down to the club and eagerly up over High Bank to be rewarded with wind all over the water, sparkling in clear autumn sunshine. As I walk along the top, free from the usual mud due to gravel laid at last by BWB, a commotion on the water comes from our resident swans taking exception to an intruder in no uncertain way with much noise and beating of wings. An angry cob is a splendid sight, from a safe distance, and this intruder takes the hint. That should keep the fish down for a while and spoil the sport for a few hardy souls scattered around the bank.

Arriving at the club compound, after walking through the trees on the north bank, I scatter a couple of Canada Geese families which have taken up residence and quickly rig the boat and get myself changed.

The wind is a perfect direction for our reservoir, giving a long run down the water and dead beat back up with short reaches across either end. The wind is not too strong but just sufficient to sit out comfortably on the beat and not have to worry about survival techniques downwind. Just the occasional puff to bring the boat to the point of planing and spread some spray around the decks. It is just perfect for a gentle sail and I lose myself in the pleasure of wind, sun and gentle practise of techniques which do become a little rusty through disuse. In particular, it always takes me a while to get into sync with the wind shifts and to be able to sail the beat satisfactorily. It's not a very shifty wind direction on our water but even getting relatively minor shifts right is satisfying and worth attempting.

For nearly two hours I explore every part of the water and then, as the wind first backs easterly and then veers southerly, the first signs of instability and the oncoming fronts. Now the shifts are large and getting two right in quick succession leaves a wake that appears almost straight into wind. If only I could work that trick regularly!

With the wind easing, and the temperature dropping, it's time to go ashore, pack up the boat safely for the winter and change for

the drive home. The waterfowl appear from the reed beds and the geese soon decide I'll leave them in peace as I walk back round the bank. Standing there, at the top of the ramp and looking back at the club bathed in the last of the setting sun, I feel quite privileged to have enjoyed such peace and quiet at such a late point in the season.

But what's that? Surely not the sound of a telephone - I can not believe that I can hear the club 'phone at this distance. No, I watch bemused as a fisherman slowly unwinds from his hunched position at the water's edge and moves to his bag in the hedge to withdraw .... a mobile 'phone! Is this progress? technology rules! OK!

I drive slowly home feeling achievement, as well as backache, and to be rewarded with a week of westerly gales and driving rain - no more sailing this year and wasn't I lucky to have another autumn sail.

Keith Lamdin (Comet 241, Aylesbury S.C.)

TREASURER'S REPORT

At this time of the year, I'm quite busy with your renewal of membership. That's where the human error comes in, cheque not signed, or dated for last year, ie 1994 instead of 1995. Wrong Comet number, have put club membership number instead. There is always something different.

We have members in Spain, Norway, Jersey and Northern Ireland, what can you tell us? Good and bad points when travelling with a dinghy abroad; good places to go; is it more socially orientated than racing; is there something different or another angle to look at sailing a Comet.

As the Treasurer, I try to use your money fairly, we have to go forward sometimes, though it's quite costly, can we improve on this? If you have any suggestions let me know.

As for the Committee, the time they spend, no charge, and for the equipment they use, no charge. As for the telephone or car mileage travelled on your behalf I often don't see a bill. As the Treasurer I can say only thank you, it gives me some monetary space.

Conclusion, Hurry up Summer!

Derek Coleman (Comet 303)

(Note: My new address and telephone number are on the inner front cover)

HAILEE COMETH TO THE COSTA DEL SOL

How it all started

In May 1991, shortly after the Gulf War which depressed property prices, I bought a house at Calahonda on the Costa del Sol while on holiday with my Mistral sailboard. In 1992 I drove via Santander towing a Wayfarer with a view to teaching sailing and taking people fishing. This did not work out; principally because it took 3 strong men to launch the Wayfarer across the beach and the rolling surf made it difficult to moor off-shore; hence the need for expensive marinas along the coast from Estapona to Benalmadena. The large rollers originate on the African coast and suddenly appear even after relatively calm weather on the Spanish side of the Med.

After six weeks I arrived one Sunday morning to find that the Wayfarer had capsized and dragged its anchor. Some local Spanish fishermen had completed the chaos by dragging the boat ashore by the free end of the anchor rope. When I arrived the boat was on the beach with broken mast and all the spare gear stolen. Two weeks later I towed the remainder back to England and sold it back to Moores at a loss of nearly £1000.

I went to the 1993 Boat Show at Earls Court intending to buy a Byte, but fell for the Comet. I sailed and raced at Bartley Sailing Club in Birmingham until July when I drove again to Spain with the Comet on an Easi-loader and towing a Graduate for a neighbour. The remaining narrative describes the pleasurable experiences I have had sailing off the Costa del Sol in my Comet.

Sailing from the beach

I keep the Comet on the public beach at Cabopino which has a small marina. I park the car on the quay near the Harbour Master's office and jump over the wall to the beach. There are a few fishing boats nearby and I have got known by the fishermen and by the Harbour Master so the boat is quite safe under its cover; although I remove the centreboard, rudder and sails as a precaution.

Our corner of the beach is protected by the inner breakwater and there is another breakwater to the SW which stops the onshore breakers. Nevertheless, the boat is sometimes half full of water by the time I clear the outer breakwater; thank goodness for the efficient self bailer. Coming ashore can be similarly hairy as you surf in with waves on the quarter and nip around under the protection of the inner breakwater. These conditions are common in May, June and September and sometimes during July and August; but in the summer the winds tend to be light and variable. Between October and April the winds tend to be from the North and East up to force 6; although the sea can be lumpy there is seldom the rolling surf which causes difficulties launching and coming ashore.

Sailing

I reckon to go sailing on average about 3 times per week for between 3 and 6 hours. I have two courses to the East and West along the coast. These are roughly rectangular and include a beat from Cabopino, a reach, a run and another reach; a lap takes between 30 and 45 minutes. Sometimes I extend the beat for about 8 kilometers towards Fuengirola or Marbella.

The local tidal range is between 18 inches and 3 feet which causes local currents. About 750 metres offshore the current floods and ebbs with the tide at up to 3 knots at springs; but inshore it often changes early providing interesting compromises in deciding the best course to take on the beat.

With wind over tide the sea can be lumpy and confused so that I have to use a lot of tiller when going to windward in order to sail over the waves not through them; on some beats I need to sit amidship rather than at the front of the cockpit.

When the wind is light I sit on the seat and watch the Hawk wind indicator. Sometimes the wind is so light that I need to lie out in the cockpit with my legs to leeward looking up at the sail; sometimes holding the mainsheet in my toes. Dinghy sailing is not popular on the Costa del Sol so that Comet 574 causes amused interest among the pedaloes and jet skiers. Even the local parasailing boat takes clients over me so that they can look down at a dinghy being sailed upright in a blow.

The marinas are full of sailing yachts which seldom go out. It is quite uncommon to see a cruising yacht under sail; when they do venture forth it is to motor from one marina to the next. The marinas are about 10 kilometers apart and there are always spare berths; costing typically £10 per day. I cannot understand why at weekends the owners of yachts do not sail to another marina for a night and return the next day; or even hop along the coast on successive weekends. The N340 coast road makes return by car or local bus so easy.

Running

I have read with interest the advice given in previous copies of Perihelion and concur with the need for a tight kicker, flat sail and boom abaft amidships. In a Laser I used to sit aft within the cockpit but in my Comet I always stand up facing forward and steering with the windward hand behind my body. I stand on the side of the cockpit opposite the boom. With waves on the quarter I find it impossible to keep the boat stable while crouching in the cockpit. By standing up I can quickly adjust my weight forward and aft to keep planing down the waves and stop the bow plowing in.

I have the centreboard two thirds up and hold on to the strop to stop falling backwards when the boat accelerates in a gust. I once fell backwards onto the tiller with the boat screaming downwind. I managed to scramble up without capsizing but I had a bruised coccyx for a few days afterwards. In very strong winds I tie the painter to the centreboard strop so that I can sand further aft while still keeping the centreboard well up. It is more important to prevent the following quarter waves acting on the centreboard than to keep the centre of effort of the sail over the centreline of the boat.

I also stand up in light winds, with the tiller fully extended so that I can lean on the boom to keep it out and stop the sheet trailing in the water. I do not adjust the position of the knot in the sheet so that the boom is no further out in light winds; but I do ease the outhaul to get more camber in the sail. The boat is always rocking when sailing on the sea so that a fuller sail gives a little more drive. I do not deliberately pump the boat except when I am trying to get back in a light wind against the current.

Fishing

I troll from the Comet during May and June when the sea is warmer and less clear. I use a lure made by Rapalla which floats but is fitted with a vane which makes it rise and fall near the surface. The Rapalla is highly considered by the local fishermen and frequently fools seagulls who hover over it for about a minute before realising that it is not a sardine. The buoyancy of the Rapalla is useful also in preventing snagging rocks when tacking.

Owing to excessive trawling there are few fish in our part of the Med; there are no shoals of mackerel such as you get in UK coastal waters during August and September. I tend to catch sea bream which swim just under the surface a few hundred metres from shore when the water is warm.

The advantage of the Comet is that you can reef the sail while afloat if the boat is going too fast for fishing. I hold the main sheet under my foot and steer with the tiller extension on my shoulder and my forearm over it. In this way I have both hands free for pulling in the nylon line. I wish I still had the short rod and reel which I bought some years ago while on holiday in Florida; but I gave it to the son of a colleague with whom I was doing some work in the USA.

Near Miss

The wind on the Costa can be light and variable; on many occasions I have beaten for 2 hours towards Marbella or Fuengirola only to have the wind change through 180° and have to beat all the way home. These massive windshifts are caused by the mountain and hills which stretch along the coast about 1 mile inland. However one tends to remember the times when you are fighting the elements.

One Saturday afternoon last November I decided to go out in a force 6 SW wind. The wind was so strong that I had to furl the sail completely before I could step the mast. Noting the size of sails being used by the sailboards, I unfurled about 5 turns. I had to add a short length of cord in order to attach the outhaul to the clew.

What I had not realised before I set off was that with my double purchase on the outhaul I could not flatten the sail. I sailed out and about for awhile, mostly half full of water, then decided to reach back ashore to adjust the outhaul. When I was abreast of the outer breakwater I capsized and the centreboard fell out.

By the time I had replaced and secured the centreboard the boat was too near the breakwater to right it and sail off. I held on to the mast head and when I had been blown onto the breakwater I walked the boat downwind until it was clear to leeward and I could get aboard. In the process I snagged a fishing line which I decided to break. After all they were all watching to see when I would crash into the rocks.

Future

The Comet has been admired by a number of holiday makers on the beach at Cabopino; primarily for its simplicity and performance for such a small mainsail. Others have marvelled at the Easi-loader; but so far mine is the only Comet on the coast. This year I propose to sail off the beach at La Cala near Fuengirola during July and August in order to make contact with the small local club which comes to life during the school holidays. I saw training being carried out in Optimists during July last year.

Perhaps I will get one or two people to buy Comets; the problem is covering the cost of getting second hand boats from the UK to Spain at a price that the local people will pay. Failing that I will try to sell my boat to a Spaniard and buy a small day cruiser on which I can live while my house is rented. I certainly will keep sailing on this most interesting coastline.

David Lihou (*Hailee* Comet 574 , Calahonda, Mijas Costa, Spain.)

BOXING DAY BLUES

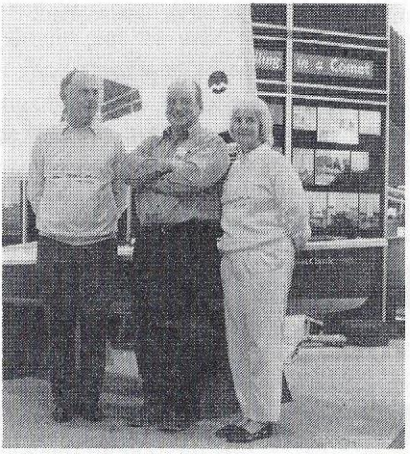
How refreshing it was on Christmas Eve, to sit down at tea-time, after a six mile walk in the thick frost and sunshine (quite magical), with a mug of steaming tea, a slab of Christmas cake, and pick up Perihelion 33, which arrived that morning.

Ah, the halcyon days of summer when Glynn Jung (554) and I chased each other around Christchurch harbour! But still, things to be done. Birds to stuff, vegies to peel etc. An alcoholic and festive day ahead; to be followed by a Boxing Day sail at Pingewood S.C. - and a reputation to protect (I came 2nd, last year).

Boxing Day dawned, and it was glorious; the frost had gone, and the sun shone. There was a light wind which was gradually increasing. My start was moderately good, I wasn't cold, and I was having great fun giving an Enterprise a hard time! That was until the penultimate downwind leg, and a gust of wind which had my name on it! One superb death roll capsize, and Nancy Gould with her father Mike were beside me in the rescue launch, smiling and making helpful noises! Only then did I wish I'd read more of the Perihelion and all those helpful articles on 'how not to capsize on a run'! The Goulds wisely sent me in, although I still didn't feel cold - my wet suit was working perfectly, perhaps due to the excesses of Christmas cake and pud; and come the prize-giving I was tactfully given the 1st lady prize, which was much appreciated even though I was the sole female entrant!

On the subject of Christmas foods, is there an optimum weight to be as a Comet sailor? Please can someone advise me, as I should like any excuse not to go back to my slimming club!

Ann Hooper (Comet 43, age a bit younger, weight - withheld!
Kennet Valley S.C.)



Andrew Simmons with Margaret and Barrie Hylton
at the London Boat Show

(photo: David Hudson)

COMET CLASS ASSOCIATION

1995 PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

This year we are running a Photography Competition, open to Association Members and their families. Our aim is to encourage you to send us your recent photos covering any aspects of "Cometry". There are two categories, Racing and Fun, but with a little imagination these should cover anything you like provided there is a clear connection with owning and/or sailing a Comet! There are cash prizes to be won and in addition the winners, runners-up, and we hope others, will have the satisfaction of seeing their work on display or in print.

RULES OF ENTRY:

1. Entry is open to members of the Comet Class Association (CCA) and their immediate families (grandparents, parents, partner, and children) but will exclude those *members* who take part in the Judging Panel.
2. Each entrant may submit up to 5 photographs to be judged in each of the categories **"Comet Racing"** and **"Comet Fun"**. (I.e. a maximum of 10 photographs per entrant).
3. Photographs shall have been taken during the period 1st September 1994 to 31st August 1995.
4. Closing date for receipt of entries is 9th September 1995.
5. Entry is free.
6. Photographs shall be submitted as 6"x4" glossy prints (colour or b&w) and shall be so packed to ensure their receipt in good condition. Negatives or transparencies should not be sent but shall be available to the CCA on request. Entries shall remain the property of the entrant but the CCA can accept no responsibility for lost or damaged photographs. The CCA will make reasonable efforts to return entries provided they are accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or stamped return label.
7. The CCA shall have the right to publish any of the entries, without fee and in whatever form it deems appropriate, in Perihelion, at exhibitions, and in any other displays or publications to the benefit of the Comet Class.

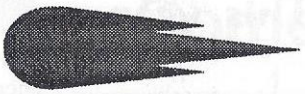
PRIZES:

1. The Judging Panel will be appointed by the CCA Chairman.
2. Each category will have a winner and a runner-up.
3. Each winner will receive £15 and each runner-up £10.
4. Names of winners and runners-up will be published in Perihelion.

ADDRESS FOR ENTRIES: All entries to be sent c/o:-

Henry Jaggers, *Kingswood Riggs*, Moira Road,
Shellbrook, Ashby de la Zouch, LE65 2TU phone 01530 563030
from whom further copies of these rules may be obtained.

COMET CLASS OPEN MEETINGS 1995



Date	Club	Area	Contact	Telephone
22. 4.95	Shearwater Sailing Club.....	West	Nic Cross	01373 822258
23. 4.95	Cam Sailing Club.....	East	Rodney Bryant	01223 290420
29. 4.95	Fishers Green Sailing Club.....	East	Steve Conroy	01992 713455
6. 5.95	Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club.....	West	Mark Govier	01222 778459
13. 5.95	Redditch Sailing Club.....	North	Paul Thompson	01527 63543
14. 5.95	Crawley Mariners Sailing Club	South	Diana Thompson	01737 552482
20. 5.95	Chester Sailing & Canoeing Club	North	John Edwards	01829 781234
27. 5.95	**Inland Championship**			
28. 5.95	**Sutton Bingham Sailing Club**		Gordon Parker	01458 223058
3. 6.95	Chipstead Sailing Club.....	East	Rob Ellis	01892 545570
3. 6.95	Glossop Sailing Club.....	North	Stuart Gilder	01457 861452
11. 6.95	.....	.....	.....	
18. 6.95	Chew Valley Sailing Club	West	**Errol Edwards**	**01272 354494**
24. 6.95	ICI Slough Sailing Club.....	South	**Mark Taylor**	**01628 602663**
2. 7.95	.....	.....	.....	
9. 7.95	Chasewater Sailing Club.....	North	John Froggatt	01255 813150
15. 7.95	Cotswold Sailing Club.....	West	David Bevan	01285 653918
23. 7.95	Aylesbury Sailing Club.....	South	Christine Stack	01442 873557
30. 7.95	Seafarers Sailing Club.....	South	John Glover	01329 665408
6. 8.95	.....	.....	.....	
13. 8.95	.....	.....	.....	
20. 8.95	.....	.....	.....	
25. 8.95 26. 8.95 27. 8.95	**National Championship** **Sheppey Yacht Club**		Ken Brown	01474 325653
3. 9.95	.....	.....	.....	
10. 9.95	Stamford Sailing Club.....	East	John Coppenhall	01733 265789
17. 9.95	.....	.....	.....	
24. 9.95	.....	.....	.....	
1.10.95	Pingewood Sailing Club.....	West	John Vail	01734 812174
7.10.95	Redsmere Sailing Club.....	North	Steve Heyes	01625 583290
15.10.95	Kingsmead Sailing Club.....	South	Len Dean	01344 772217
22.10.95	.....	.....	.....	

Orbital Trophy

Qualification for the Orbital Trophy will require attendance at :-

1. One Championship. 2. Meetings in at least two of the four areas. 3. Six events to count.
4. Ties will be decided on the results at the National or Inland Championships.

COMET CLASS ASSOCIATION

APHELION TROPHIES 95

WESTERN AREA

Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club
Shearwater Sailing Club
Chew Valley Sailing Club
Cotswold Sailing Club
Pingewood Sailing Club

Three events are needed to qualify and the best three results from the five available, will count. Ties will be decided by discards or the last head to head result.
Prizes will be presented at Pingewood S.C. on 1st October and will be awarded to all Qualifiers.

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EASTERN AREA

Cam Sailing Club
Fishers Green Sailing Club
Chipstead Sailing Club
Stamford Sailing Club

Three events are needed to qualify and the best three results from the four available, will count. Ties will be decided by discards or the last head to head result.
Prizes will be presented at Stamford S.C. on 10th September and will be awarded to all Qualifiers.

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NORTHERN AREA

Redditch Sailing Club
Chester Sailing Club
Glossop Sailing Club
Chasewater Sailing Cub
Redsmere Sailing Club

Three events are needed to qualify and the best three results from the five available, will count. Ties will be decided by discards or the last head to head result.
Prizes will be presented at Redsmere S.C. on 7th October and will be awarded to all Qualifiers.

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SOUTHERN AREA

Crawley Mariners Sailing Club
ICI Slough Sailing Club
Aylesbury Sailing Club
Seafarers Sailing Club
Kingsmead Sailing Club

Three events are needed to qualify and the best three results from the five available, will count. Ties will be decided by discards or the last head to head result.
Prizes will be presented at Kingsmead S.C. on 15th October will be awarded to all Qualifiers.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

APRIL - JUNE 1995

Saturday	22nd April	Shearwater open
Sunday	23rd April	Cam open
Saturday	29th April	Fishers Green open
Saturday	6th May	Merthyr Tydfil open
Saturday	13th May	Redditch open
Sunday	14th May	Crawley Mariners open
Saturday	20th May	Chester open
Saturday	27th May	INLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS (see below)
Sunday	28th May	" "
Saturday	3rd June	Chipstead open
Saturday	3rd June	Glossop open
Sunday	18th June	Chew Valley open
Saturday	24th June	ICI Slough open

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25 - 27 August National Championships at Sheppey Y.C.

COMET INLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS - 1995

at Sutton Bingham Sailing Club

27th & 28th May

Two races each day - three to count.

Entry on the day

Camping available.

Information from: Gordon Parker - 01458 223058

Norah Gould - 01635 298074

OPEN MEETING LOCATIONS

(this map is to scale)

PERIHELION

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in June 1995. Contributions to me by the end of May please. When telephoning, don't forget the extra "1" in the code.

ICE-YACHTING FOR BEGINNERS

After a really enjoyable first season of Comet sailing my thoughts turned, cautiously, to Winter sailing remembering the mild Winters we had had recently. But being perverse by nature I also wondered how I could take advantage of a really hard Winter, like the one of 1953/4 when I was doing my National Service in Germany.

On two days that Winter I had had the glorious experience of ice yachting, gentle winds, clear skies and a comfortable fast sail on the heavily frozen Steinhuder Meer, near Hanover.

Getting started

How then to get an ice yacht? I quickly discovered that ice yachting is not a subject to be found on the shelves of Waterstones and Dillons. However, a call to Yachting Monthly which, to my surprise, was answered by the editor, resulted in me faxing the Canadian and USA Sailing Associations for help. This came promptly from the Canadians (I don't think they knew about the time differences between the countries).

I was soon in touch with Pete and Stan of Canadian Winter Sailing Systems of Oompah, Ontario (I was subsequently delighted to discover they also made musical instruments). We quickly agreed that they would make me a boat and ship it to England before Christmas, ready for the frozen January and February which I knew was bound to come after the hard Autumn we were already experiencing.

The boat duly arrived at Evenley, having cleared customs, on Christmas Eve, and armed with Steve's instructions we spent Christmas trying to break into the packing case and identify the various parts.

Although I rather grandly but naively thought that we would be the only ice Yachters in the U.K., Stan and Pete had kindly given me the name of Chris Williams as the U.K. Secretary of the International DN Ice Yacht Racing Association. I nervously contacted Chris who was delighted that we were joining him and one other in the U.K.. Chris couldn't have been more helpful, indeed without him I doubt if we would have sailed last winter.

He came to visit us in Evenley with his boat and (in the snow - an encouraging sign) showed us how he rigged it and we had a go at ours. The worst problem we found - continually - was that unlike the Comet she had standing rigging. We seemed to expect the mast to stay upright supported by two or fewer shrouds!

Preparing for our trip abroad

Slowly it dawned on us that it wasn't going to be a 'Hell freezing over' winter in the U.K. and if we were going to get any sailing we would have to go abroad. After much help and advice we settled for a fortnight in Sweden on Lake Malaren, going via Denmark to see friends for a couple of days.

The boat comes in a number of bits which have to be bolted toge-

ther. There is the hull - rather like a slim canoe - the plank which is akin to wings and is bolted well aft on the hull, mast, boom and sail. Most important are the runners, one of which is fitted on the bow and the other two on each end of the plank.

We had to get canvas bags to take each of these parts and managed to find the only upholsterer open in the week after Christmas. She (like us) had never experienced anything like it before but came up trumps with a wonderful set of bags well in time for our departure at the beginning of February.

We loaded up the car and put the boat (named Fresca) on the minute roof rack (which we also had to find in a hurry) on a day when the rain was horizontal and the wind chill adjusted temperature lower than anything we would experience in the next fortnight.

Off to Sweden

We drove nervously to the ferry at Harwich, crossed to Denmark in a full gale and had a splendid weekend. We left on Sunday at 5.30 am with only 5 litres of petrol and 150km to the ferry, crossed to Gothenberg and arrived at Sundbyholm about 100km south west of Stockholm at 6pm for dinner.

Sundbyholm was wonderful, with one exception. We had a half chalet, two excellent meals a day, the lake was frozen to a depth of at least 30cm, it was continually sunny and the scenery was beautiful. The only problem was that, unusually, they had had about 3-4 inches of snow.

First attempts at sailing the ice-yacht

Having assembled the boat, successfully, we had a go on the vast frozen snow-covered lake. We managed a few runs of about 100m which were exhilarating until one hit a minor drift which caught the plank, filled ones face with snow and stopped the boat.

We contacted Ake Luks, a friend of Chris Williams who lived in the nearby town of Eskilstuna and he came out one day to see if we could get the boat going on the skis which we had bought with the boat for just these conditions. But either the lack of wax or too little wind resulted in us failing to get going.

Meanwhile we had contacted another friend of Chris Williams who lived in Gothenberg who told us that Lake Aspen, nearby, was well frozen, free of snow and that there was sailing.

After a certain amount of agonising we left Sundbyholm and moved to the Good Morning Hotel near Lake Aspen. It was a bit like being back on board ship, with four berths in a room about 10ft by 6ft, although we didn't have to share! Still, at £22 per head per night we didn't complain.

We now had four days holiday left before catching the boat at Gothenberg again.

Jan Fagerberg took us under his wing immediately, explained why our boat wouldn't sail in a force 1 wind whilst his would do 20 m.p.h. (I had got one of the chocks which held a runner out of

true). He invited us to his house, spent over an hour in his garage/workshop (in minus 15 degrees C) putting our equipment in order and with his wife gave us a delightful, alcoholic and entertaining dinner.

Success at last

From then on (apart from one really windless day) we got going - and what a relief it was after all the preparation to actually sail!

Sailing an ice yacht is rather different to sailing a Comet. The main differences are first that you have to run to get the boat going in the first place. You sprint (in spiked shoes; we didn't have any) put one foot on the plank, slide into the boat when you have "lift off" and adopt your sailing position. flat on your back, as quickly as possible.

Secondly the boat sails really fast. This can be up to four times as fast as the wind (could this be explained by Bernoulli's theorem?). We certainly did over 30 m.p.h. in a force 2 which is quite exhilarating!

You can hike, ie have one runner lift, which can lead to a capsize if not corrected in the conventional way, pointing up or easing the main. Like a Comet you get as much rake and bend in the mast as you possibly can with the result that you are lying on your back, holding the tiller with one hand or your knees and with the boom on one shoulder. This all puts a strain on the neck muscles and novices like us are often seen holding their heads on (up).

The really strange thing about Ice Yachting is that you can't sail downwind (something to do with Bernoulli again I expect). You have to broad reach and gybe to achieve your objective. Furthermore you only let the mainsheet out by about 5cm compared with sailing close-hauled (note 3). Altogether an eerie experience!

Stopping is just the same as conventional sailing, but you have to remember that you travel a great deal further on ice than you do in water (note 4) once you put the brakes on. In an emergency you may have to keep going round in circles (one of us managed this without the emergency!).

On our final day we had the best sailing of the holiday in the morning (the wind was about 2 and we flew!). We changed, had lunch and caught the afternoon boat back to England after a fortnight in which the temperature never rose above freezing.

We had simply a wonderful time. Everyone was so incredibly kind and helpful and we loved learning about a new sport. We'll certainly be going back to Sweden next winter, even if the U.K. freezes over.

Anyone have any contacts in Land Yachting?!

Jeremy Hebblethwaite (Comet 598)

Reflections on ice-yachting

(Photo: J Hebblethwaite)

FLUID FLOW - PART 1
WATCHING FLUIDS FLOW

Right now I'm not far above the bottom rung of the ladder in the skill of sailing, but I do know something about fluid flow and incorrect references to Bernoulli's theorem tend to wake me up. I thought that, in the non-racing season, some words on this topic might interest some and perhaps even help. The other possibility is that I might confuse the better helms sufficiently to enable me to catch up a bit!

We've got to have fluid flow

Without fluids our Comets would be as much use for transport as a household bath on the surface of the moon. The boat's natural environment is at the junction between two fluids (air and water) and if neither moves we still have a pretty useless piece of transport, (like the canal barge we would need a horse, or equivalent). Of course, harnessing the power of the flows and reducing the resistance due to them is what gets us going.

Don't think it's easy

You would have thought then that those who are successful at the practical things involved in sailing would know a lot about fluid flow. Unfortunately, no, it is a very difficult subject indeed to understand in any depth.

Whilst some concepts really are easy to understand, some quite simple practical situations can generate impossible theoretical problems if you want to predict what will happen. Much of the time we have to "suck it and see", but fortunately people have been doing that for over 100 years now (see my note at the end).

What I'd like to do in this article is to mention some simple concepts and then try to encourage you to watch fluids more, you might find it interesting.

Large and small flows

To start with, within reason the size of things doesn't matter much. The airflow around the smallest flying insect you've ever seen is subject to much the same aerodynamics as those involved in the largest aircraft that has ever been built. The flow is not exactly the same of course, but the same principles apply. You can watch fluid flowing in all sorts of places and something similar will most likely happen around your boat too. Examples of interesting flows can be found in very everyday places (teacup, bath, cigarette smoke, clouds). Be careful though, you might have to watch discreetly or you may be branded as an absent-minded scientist by the rest of the family.

What moves?

Where you watch from is important. If you watch from the bank, a boat, and the waves it generates, move by. The air moves too (wind) and so may the water (tide or current). But sitting in your Comet, it, and the waves, are fixed relative to you. The water and air still move, but from your viewpoint not in the same way as before. Usually a viewpoint from within the boat is more helpful.

Types of fluid flow:
There are several quite different types of flow, three of them are "laminar", "turbulent" and "vortex" flow.

Laminar flow is when the fluid moves smoothly in straight lines or gentle curves. Watch for it in the smoke rising near to a lighted cigarette held in the hand or a candle that has just been blown out.
Turbulent flow is when the fluid moves along generally in one direction but goes round and round, randomly in many directions. The flow from the cigarette or candle is likely to change from laminar to turbulent after rising a few inches.
Vortex flow is when fluid rotates as if it were solid. You can make a vortex very easily by stirring a cup of tea briskly.

You may not want to know about these kinds of flow, but all three (and more) are going on around your sail and hull all the time you are sailing. Along with the waves you make, they pretty well determine your sail power and hull drag. The balance between laminar and turbulent flow determines when your sail will stall and the size of your hull wake. Vortex flow is fundamental to sail power and if the sail did not generate vortices it would be no use at all (the best minds were puzzling on this one over 100 years ago!).

Making fluid flow visible
There are many ways that the flow of a very transparent fluid can be made clearly visible. I have mentioned some already (teacup, cigarette etc). Other ways are to float something on water (white powder, green algae !) and injecting fine small particles (smoke, aluminium powder) into airflow. Another one I have found is to watch the "shadows" of very small surface waves on the bottom of a bath.

In our Comet we have usually some things to help us know the flow around the sail (burgee, hawk and tell-tales). Of the flow around the hull, not much can be seen. The main things are the flow in the bow-wave and in the wake trailing away at the stern. But there is a lot more going on underneath that we can't see which at some speeds can have an important influence on boatspeed.

Some ideas for watching fluid flows

The stall: If your sailing area is covered with green algae near the jetty this is ideal for seeing the flow in a stall. Use your dagger board, dip it half in and move it firstly as it does in the boat, the flow moving along its length, then try angling it at various angles. You should see a turbulent wake clearly and at some angles it will stall. When moved at right-angles to its length you will probably see some huge vortices.

Alan Browning (Comet 361)

P.S. No references are given here, because virtually all of what I have written was known 40 years ago, when I learned it, and much was known 50 years before that, if not 100. If I inadvertantly write anything untrue, I promise to apologise and print what IS right, with full acknowledgement.

CUNNINGHAM KNOT

When I bought my Comet, I got the impression from the previous owner that the Cunningham should be tied to the boom with a bowline and my Comet Handbook did not educate me, merely saying "tie the cord to the boom". Having many times fiddled about trying to make the loop of my bowline as small as possible, to get the maximum sail stretch, I noticed the Comet at the London Boat Show with no bowline, just a couple half-hitches. With half-hitches the loop can of course be easily tightened up after tying. I expect mine was the only Comet sporting a bowline there, but if anyone else needs it, my photograph (figure 5) is I think self-explanatory.

Alan Browning (Comet 361, Frensham Pond SC)

WINTER SURFING IN A COMET

On January 15th 1995 I was enjoying a quiet sail in a force 3 with the only other boat in the harbour, a Laser. The Laser sailor, Stan Laurenson-Batt, is a retired Contender sailor, as well as Tasar and Laser, who's done a lot of international racing. Most of all, however, he loves surfing and on this day was bored. With a force 6 - 7 forecast for late afternoon and a deep low over the Solent, he figured there'd be a swell. He also thought it time I became initiated in the art of wave-riding. Although I remembered an article on sea sailing shortly after I started sailing I was nervous. With the lifeboat about to go out on practise and such an experienced sailor beside me I decided to go for it (I knew I'd forever make excuses otherwise).

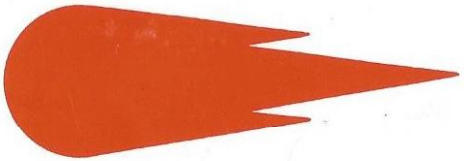
The first bit of fun was getting out of the harbour and across the sandbar. The waves were really only 2 to 3 feet, but of course from trough to peak they seemed bigger to a novice and beating through them was a wet process.

I have to report that, so long as you sit well back, the Comet is a delight in the sea. The business of shooting down and across the face of a wave, then back up to the lip again if you can, is quite stimulating, especially with the odd gust from the side. Once I'd realised that my boat didn't really want to go over and had got the knack of sitting out right on the transom the session turned into real fun.

After about 40 minutes of this I realised that the wind and waves had got up and I started to get frightened again, which affected my sailing. I reckon Stan spotted my discomfort, because he signalled me to follow him back to harbour. The waves at the sandbar looked pretty hairy and I was definitely edgy about the dead run in, anticipating wallows and death-rolls through the surf. Of course, the little Comet handled it beautifully, lifting and shooting through.

This may be old hat to some of the seasoned sailors..... but it was a real surprise to me. I now see what the fuss is about and yet another reason why the Comet's such a popular little boat.

Glynn Jung (Comet 554, Mudeford SC)



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