

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

## NEWSLETTER NUMBER 36 AUTUMN 1995

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### Front cover:

Guy Wilkins, National Champion  
for the fifth year in a row.

(Photo: Anne Browning)



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

If you ask an astrologer about Comets they would look interested and pronounce that they foretell a momentous occasion or a prelude to a change. Well Comet sailors would agree, because if we went into the fortune telling business we would without a moments hesitation predict the weather on the dates of our National Championships. Comet Championships are Windy, no Very Windy.

The very first Championship I entered was at the Sovereign Sailing Club, Eastbourne in 1988, and gales caused the abandonment of the second day's racing, and I think every year since has been incredibly rough. Everyone capsized at Ardley; Hampton pier produced the memorable planing photographs by Dave Hudson, and Shoreham, Gunfleet and Queen Mary's had their moments. Reminiscing is the pastime of the getting-on-a-bit age group so I won't dwell too long on the past but it has been interesting.

This has probably been the hottest summer most of us have experienced and generally winds have been light but not at our Championships. This year at the Sutton Bingham Inland Championship, Alex Reeve produced a masterly display at the wipe-out conditions, to win 3 out of the 4 races and I have heard that on windy days before racing he has been known to cheer. So Alex, stick with us and our astrologer.

So all this talk of winds brings me on to the National Championships. This year was probably the most closely contested of any of our Championships with a different winner of every race. The rescue services were first class, and needed to be, and we are very grateful to Sheppey Yacht Club for their efforts on our behalf. We all came away with enough stories to keep us in beer for 6 months and the friendliness of all the participants is something I will cherish.

What is left to say about the winner? Guy Wilkins has won more Comet Championships than Margaret Thatcher won elections. Five consecutive wins is an incredible performance which will be remembered as long as the Comet Class exists and in all those races I can not remember him sailing a bad race. Year after year he has produced consistently high quality performances in every race and his coolness and tactical ability are fast becoming legendary.

Mark Wilkins was a very close second and Richard Smallwood, although he did not win a race, read the tides to perfection, knew what he wanted to do and produced a marvellous series to finish third.

I was extremely impressed by the sailing ability of all the entrants, and I will give you just one example. Diana Thompson, well reefed, was lapped in the last race but when the squall hit the fleet causing most of us to capsize, Diana masterfully sailed back to the club unaided, with winds gusting to force 6.

Finally I am going to have another try at this winning business. I am going to track down Jean Wilkins to find out the secret of what she fed her children on when they were growing up?

# **FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS**

## **WESTERN AREA**

### **Chew Valley**

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 565 R Smallwood
- 3 334 E Edwards
- 4 460 M Govier
- 5 419 P Govier
- 6 650 P Hossell

### **Cotswold**

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 573 A Reeve
- 3 334 E Edwards
- 4 565 R Smallwood
- 5 650 P Hossell
- 6 625 T Best

## **EASTERN AREA**

### **Chipstead**

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 555 J Windibank
- 3 657 M Wilkins
- 4 188 S Thompson
- 5 625 T Best
- 6 303 D Coleman

## **NORTHERN AREA**

### **Glossop**

- 1 277 P Bradey
- 2 474 J Bradburn
- 3 650 P Hossell
- 4 648 B Hamilton
- 5 331 S Heyes
- 6 437 B Hardy

### **Chasewater**

- 1 573 A Reeve
- 2 650 P Hossell
- 3 334 E Edwards
- 4 625 T Best
- 5 670 P Hayes
- 6 644 N Ford

## **SOUTHERN AREA**

### **ICI, Slough**

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 625 T Best
- 3 573 A Reeve
- 4 188 S Thompson
- 5 303 D Coleman
- 6 565 R Smallwood

### **Aylesbury**

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 573 A Reeve
- 3 625 T Best
- 4 555 J Windibank
- 5 500 H Jagers
- 6 370 R Kerry

### **Seafarers**

- 1 160 B Welham
- 2 40 S Cook
- 3 565 R Smallwood
- 4 518 R Ballam
- 5 303 D Coleman

(only 5 ranked)

**Note:** 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.



**NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS REPORT**

Sheppey Yacht Club hosted the Comet National Championships during the weekend of August 25-27. The series began on Friday in moderate seas, with a strong westerly breeze of 25-30 knots causing difficult conditions for the fleet of 30 small singlehanders. Rescue boats were rather busy downwind. Experienced sea sailors capitalised on these conditions in the first race, the leader establishing a considerable lead, with survival being the order of the day. David Forsdike was first, Guy Wilkins second and Richard Smallwood third.

A steady 15 knot westerly breeze promised ideal conditions for the first race on Saturday. However, a strongly flooding tidal stream lifted many starters over the line and the race finally began after a general recall. The tide became the main factor, with few place changes taking place. Mark Wilkins won, with Smallwood second and Guy Wilkins third.

On Saturday afternoon there was an abrupt change, with the variable wind dropping and shifting through 30 degrees. Many place changes occurred during the beats due to these shifts, and an ebbing tidal stream. Guy Wilkins won this time, with Mark Wilkins second and Smallwood third.

Sunday's forecast promised an increasing wind to 35 knots by late afternoon. As the final day's programme was for two back-to-back races it was likely to be the most demanding of the championship. The first race began in 15 knots, gradually increasing to 30 by the final beat, and rescue boats were again in demand for the latter half of the race. An early lead had been established by Jake Sutton, closely followed by the Wilkins brothers. These positions were held to the finish, with Guy second and Mark third.

A decision was made to cancel the final race due to winds in excess of 40 knots. The weekend proved to be most successful, with competitors experiencing a variety of conditions.

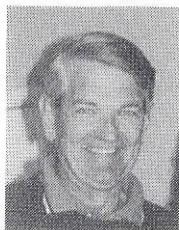
Ken Brown (Sheppey Y.C.)



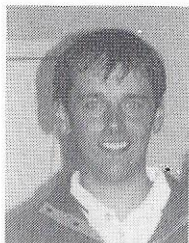
Guy Wilkins



Mark Wilkins



Richard Smallwood



David Forsdike

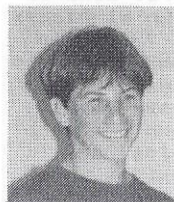


The scene at Sheppey Y.C.



Heidi Dodd

1st Lady



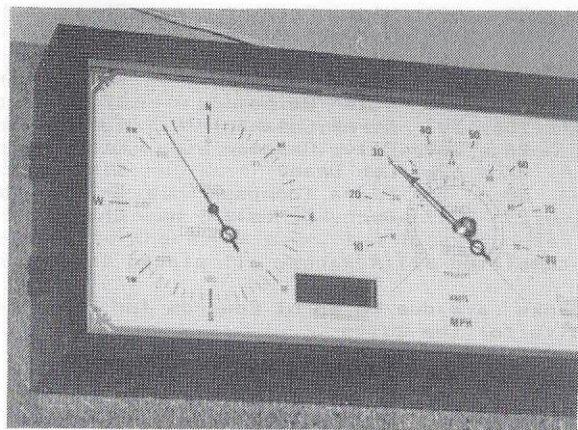
Robert Hamilton

1st Junior



Robin Ballam

1st Veteran



The club anemometer on Sunday afternoon  
nearly 30 knots !

(Photos: Anne Browning)



## NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

National Champion 1995/6: 353 Guy Wilkins  
 Runner-up: 573 Mark Wilkins

1st Lady: 314 Heidi Dodd  
 1st Junior: 150 Robert Hamilton  
 1st Veteran: 518 Robin Ballam  
 Middle of fleet: 312 Jeff Bryant  
 \* Special prize: 117 Michael Thompson

### Positions:

1	353	Guy Wilkins	Chipstead
2	657	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
3	565	Richard Smallwood	Shearwater
4	513	David Forsdike	Welwyn Garden City
5	642	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
6	334	Errol Edwards	Chew Valley
7	555	John Windibank	Chipstead
8	188	Simon Thompson	Crawley Mariners
9	573	Alex Reeve	ICI, Slough
10	670	Peter Hayes	Redesmere
11	474	John Bradburn	Elton
12	314	Heidi Dodd	Littleton
13	549	Martin Vinson	Littleton
14	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley Mariners
15	117	Michael Thompson	Crawley Mariners
16	312	Jeff Bryant	Chipstead
17	625	Tony Best	ICI, Slough
18	150	Robert Hamilton	ICI, Slough
19	170	Ian Hodge	Redoubt
20	644	Nigel Ford	Chase
21	174	Michael Baxter	Chipstead
22	62	Emer Power	Chipstead
23	376	Amy Luxford	Welwyn Garden City
24	160	Brian Welham	ICI, Slough
25	303	Derek Coleman	Sutton Bingham
26	209	Clive Chapman	Littleton
27	626	Len Dean	Kingsmead
28	50	Diana Thompson	Crawley Mariners
29	247	Barry O'Herlihy	Chipstead

\* completed all 4 races, all placed lower did not

Thanks are due to Errol Edwards for providing the complete results for the Editor.



## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

OCTOBER to DECEMBER 1995

Sunday	1st Oct	Pingewood open	John Vail: 01734 812174
Saturday	7th Oct	Redesmere open	Steve Heyes: 01625 583290
Sunday	15th Oct	Kingsmead open	Len Dean: 01344 772217

## EDITOR'S NOTES

Thank you to all the contributors this time. Again we have a varied crop of articles in addition to the open meeting and Championships reports and results.

On the cover you will find, not a photograph of a Comet, but one of Guy Wilkins holding the National Champion's cup. I felt that having won the Nationals an unprecedented 5 times in a row he really deserved a cover picture, so there it is. We could have had a special photograph session for this, but the photo Anne took at the prize-giving captured Guy at the "moment of triumph" so to speak. The background there was poor, but I have done my best to remove it.

Alan Browning

## BUILDER'S REPORT

It's been quite a while since I put pen to Perihelion and a lot has been happening at Comet Dinghies.

We made it to the London Boat Show with the new Comet Trio and of course Duo and Comet. The new dinghy was well received and we looked forward to a busy year.

February 1st saw us moving to new premises with plenty of room for storage of finished boats. There is a much bigger office ("couldn't get any smaller" South Molton visitors might say), and even a showroom/display area (yet to be finished).

Early March saw us all at Sailboat '95 at its new venue of Alexandra Palace. This really was a great show and Comet Dinghies have already booked a large trade stand for next year. The Comet and Duo Class Associations are of course going to exhibit in their own right, but the added presence of extra Comets on a trade stand can only improve the public's awareness of these great dinghies.

I am sorry I haven't been able to visit or even race in any Comet open meetings this year but I was pleased to see some new faces at Sutton Bingham and at Sheppey. The Nationals seemed the ideal place to "go public" with the Comet Mino, a new variation of the Comet. Although the standard Comet can (and often is) reefed for heavy weather or juniors, I have felt there is a market for a smaller sail with a lighter mast specifically for juniors and lightweights. The sail is 54 sq ft, or 5 sq m (Topper size) but uses a 3 ft shorter bottom mast. Rigging and stepping the mast are now much easier for youngsters.

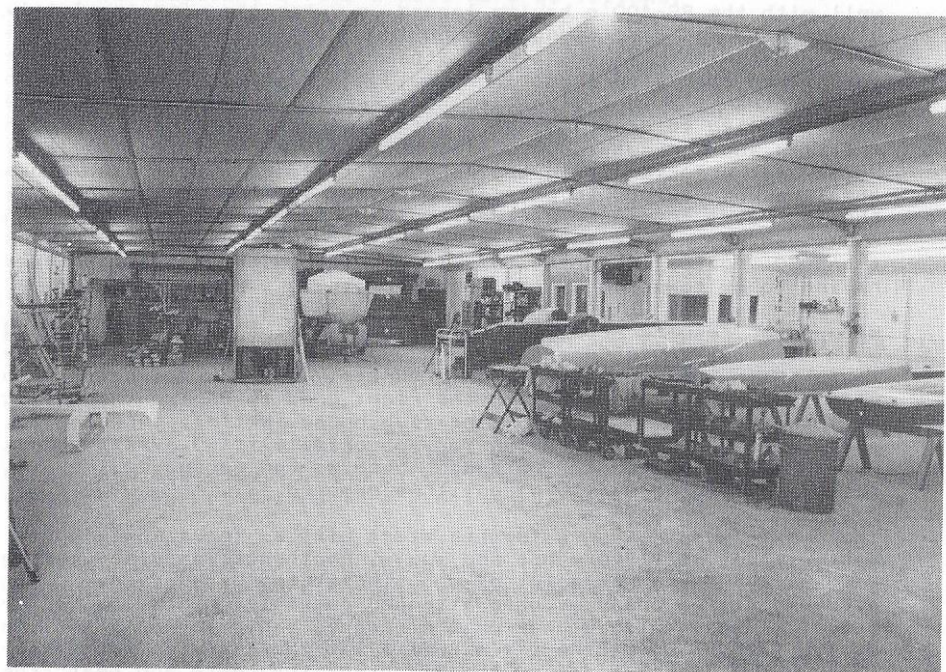
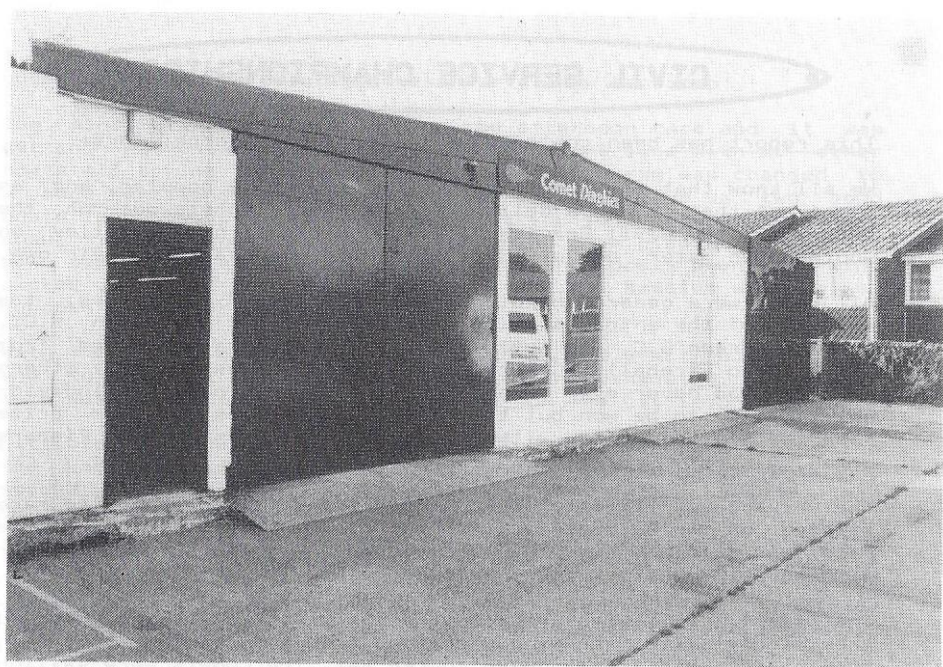
The smaller and, more importantly, vertically lower sail area of the Mino enable lightweights to sail well and I think should broaden the market of the Comet. In its most basic form, with simple rigging, no deck cleats or ratchet block, the Comet Mino is a whole £100 less than a standard Comet.

The Mino sail and shorter bottom mast is available to fit on existing Comets. I think the Comet Mino should be ideal for sailing schools and at the very least help boost Comet sail numbers!

Andrew Simmons









## CIVIL SERVICE CHAMPIONSHIPS

This report has been contributed by one of the competitors:

We all know that the Comet is becoming ever more popular, and as proof of that it was a delight to see enough Comets out on the water at the Civil Service Sailing Championships at Netley on Southampton Water, on July 8th/9th, to form a class on their own.

All races were general handicaps with a total of 67 entries, the majority of the entrants being members of either Littleton S.C., Fishers Green S.C. and Netley Cliff S.C. The boats ranged from RS-400's to Fireballs, Comets, Enterprises, Solos and many others which we had never ever seen before. There were numerous individual trophies to be won but the most treasured was the team prize "The Littleton Bell" with the current holders being Fishers Green.

The weekend was timed to give us neap tides and the practise race started on the Saturday in a steady force 2 from the south. The race was fairly uneventful with the RS-400's and Fireballs finishing well up after times were corrected.

The first qualifying race on the Saturday afternoon started promisingly with the wind unchanged from the morning, the sun burning down and a triangular course set. The Comets were sailing along in the middle of the fleet not expecting to do particularly well with the RS-400's having lapped us, when the wind completely disappeared and also swung through 180 degrees. The rules of the event state that all boats with a handicap greater than 123 were to sail in the "slow fleet" and could therefore be finished a lap earlier than the fast fleet at the race officer's discretion. The wind started to drop just before the second Comet went through the line and was subsequently finished having completed two laps. Heidi was unfortunate in that she was the first Comet to cross the line and decided to persist against the tide, ending up being the last boat to finish at 1830. Only her first two laps were to count and she wished somebody had let her know that earlier. Less than 30 boats completed this first race with those stranded having to be towed in by the rescue boats.

When the results were calculated there was euphoria all round with the top three Comets being placed 2nd, 4th and 5th (there would have been another but unfortunately one had forgotten to sign on). This set us all in the right mood to party the night away on the lawn in front of the club house. Netley, once again, put on a wonderful barbecue for approximately 160 very hungry people and we danced to the disco (once we had persuaded the D.J. to play something suitable) until we dropped.

The next morning saw a fresher start with a force 3-4 north-easterly but still very hot and sunny. Another triangular course was set and there was a lot of shouting at the marks (very reminiscent of the opens we have attended recently). Once again the speedier boats planed away on the reaches and came round to lap us again. The Comets were finished a lap short again which allowed us to find a space on the beach for the boats and beat the

queues for lunch - thank goodness for a slow handicap!

The wind started to pick up for the afternoon race and it was getting rather hairy planing along the start line with 60 other boats all trying to avoid one another. The course was changed to a more exciting figure-of-eight course which gave us two good beats and two planing reaches. Don't you just get the urge to shout "YA-HOO" when the boat gets humming on a plane? The Comets all seemed to fare better against the other boats when the wind picked up and it was fun to get into tactical hassles with Solos, Europes and Enterprises.

With the Comets once again being given a head start to the beach and to the boat park, we packed up feeling exhausted. The pressure was on for the results - who had won The Littleton Bell?

Littleton managed to win all of the individual prizes including the Ladies prize and first Comet, which went to Heidi and the second Comet prize which Martin won. The Bell, however, was retained once again by Fishers Green.

It was great to sail the Comets on the sea and be seen by the other boats to be able to get results. All in all the entire weekend was very enjoyable. We were well looked after by Netley Cliff Sailing Club and we thank them for their catering and their hospitality.

The final positions of the Comets were as follows:

13th	314	Heidi Dodd	Littleton
21st	549	Martin Vinson	Littleton
31s	451	Simon Gomersall	Littleton
32nd	660	Jenny Colclough	Fishers Green
33rd	498	David Armitage	Littleton
56th	581	Peter Joyes	Littleton

#### Footnote from Norah Gould:

The Civil Service Championships are held annually at Netley Cliff S.C. It is a 2-day event, usually held early in July.

All civil servants are eligible, with CSSA and CSSC shareholders being eligible for specific trophies.

Obviously many of those competing are also members of civil service sailing clubs, and there is a trophy based on club representation. However, there are many more civil servants at other clubs who could enter, and it was encouraging that this year's champion does not belong to a civil service club.

It was also encouraging to find that there were sufficient Comets entered this year for them to have their own class. Well done all of you! We look forward to seeing even more of you next year.



## CHAIRMAN'S AGM REPORT

I would like to thank Sheppey Yacht Club for hosting our 1995 national Championship and especially Ken Brown who has worked closely with us and is our race officer for the week end. Sheppey came to our rescue after we were forced to abandon previous planned venues and I know that it is a busy time for the club with their big event of the year, the Round the Island Race, taking place next week.

The Comet class has had another full year which started again with the Leisure Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, and I would like to thank the 45 helpers who turned out to man the stand for the week and Margaret for co-ordinating the arrangements.

Sailboat this year moved to Alexander Palace and the attendance this year was better than ever. Thank you to all those who helped on the stand, you all looked very smart in your Comet sweat shirts. Diane Thompson lent us her boat to exhibit at the show and when I arrived at her house she had the sail unrolled in her lounge was cleaning it up for us. Many men I know treat their lounge as a workshop but Diane has made this another first for women, thank you again Diane.

Jake Sutton started the Sailing programme by representing us at The Draycote Silver Salver Pursuit race and Jake, myself and Guy Wilkins sailed at the Freezer Event there.

Guy Wilkins successfully defended his National Championship which made 4 wins in a row and he also won the Association Championship for the third time but they have been won on alternate years 1990, 92 and 94.

Mark Wilkins won the Orbital Trophy for the second year running. We had 20 qualifiers, the highest number we have had so far. Mark also won the Eastern and Western Aphelion Trophies both for the second consecutive year, Jake Sutton took the South and Richard Smallwood the Northern Aphelion Trophies.

There are 21 Open and Championship events this year which is one less than last year. Some events disappear and new events take their place but our tidal events have been particularly poorly attended and have almost entirely disappeared from the calendar. Our one tidal open event at Seafarers this year had only 8 entries, and the club understandably does not feel it is worth disrupting their own sailing programme for such a poor turnout. Other events poorly represented were the Cam with 4, Merthyr Tydfil with 6 and Chew Valley with 7. Please try and support your local event to encourage clubs to make the effort for us.

The Class is very fortunate with the first class team we have on the committee:

Norah produces clear and prompt minutes for us and deals efficiently with the correspondence, and she co-ordinated our sailing programme.



Derek's favourite saying when he speaks to me is that "We must keep on the ball" and that's pretty well what he does to the committee, keeps us on the ball.

Fiona has been very enterprising and competent in organising the very interesting and good quality trophies for us and said that she is sorry to miss the AGM and the Championship but her husband Tom is in poor health at present.

Henry is the longest serving member of the committee and imparts invaluable skill and knowledge. We make use of his skill in computer graphics for our advertising and he is organising our photographic competition this year. Henry asked me to encourage you to put your entries in soon.

Alan has transformed the newsletter with his innovations and is constantly chasing the top racing helms for articles and advice. I particularly like the new Interview feature.

Margaret's work on the committee is totally indispensable and I would like to thank her and Barrie for all the help and encouragement they provide.

Finally, I thank Andrew for building our lovely Comets and for his support to the Class Association, and what would we do without Karen for her invaluable help.

John Windibank, Chairman



## CHOOSING YOUR RESCUE BOAT HEADGEAR

I have suffered a minor setback due to having a stroke recently.

It was all very simple really, I was on rescue duty at Chipstead at the end of October - it was wet and windy. My companion, Jeff Bryant, and I were rather cold despite our protective suits. Jeff wore a hat with ear flaps and I had on my cotton sailing hat. After we had packed away the rescue boat we enjoyed a lovely cuppa.

Next morning I had a paralysed face! I couldn't operate my mouth, even to eat, and I discovered that I couldn't even write.

The doctor (next day) said that I had suffered a temporary stroke due to chilling of the blood cells at one side of the head and, although in general I would recover, I would always have a speech impediment.

So the moral of this tale is: if you are on rescue duty in unkind weather, it might be a good idea to wear something better than a cotton cap.

Tony Martin (Comet 512)



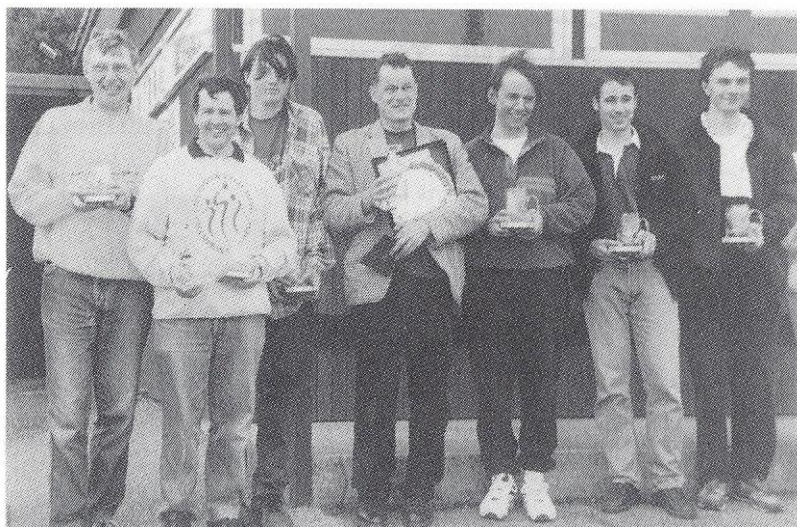
### National Championships prize-winners:

Left to right: John Windibank, Mark Wilkins, Jake Sutton, Robin Ballam, David Forsdike, Guy Wilkins, Robert Hamilton, Heidi Dodd, Richard Smallwood, Errol Edwards.

(Photos: Anne Browning)







### Inland Championships prize-winners:

Left to right: John Coppenhall, Errol Edwards, Jake Sutton, Alex Reeve, David Forsdike, Simon Thompson, Tom Hasker

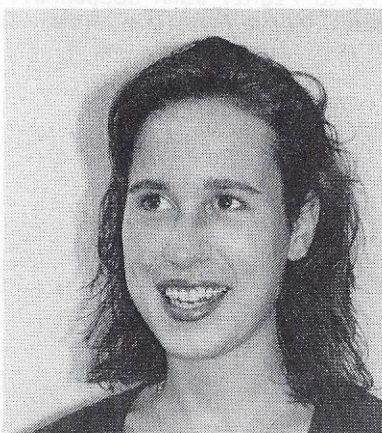
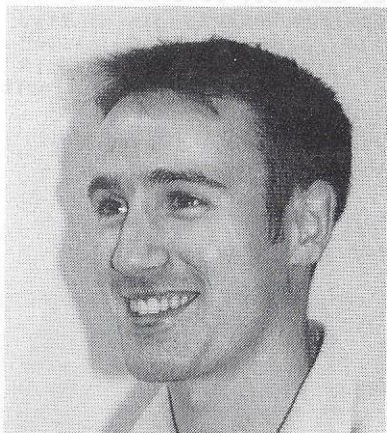
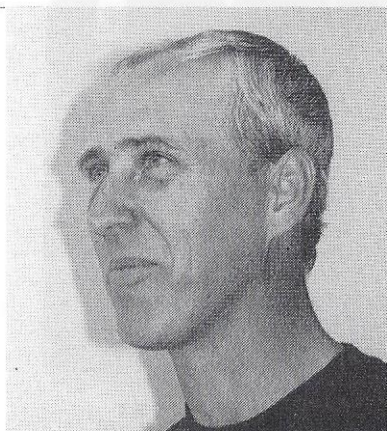
(Photos: John Windibank)



Alex Reeve, Inland Champion



## TALKING TO - - - THE THOMPSON FAMILY



This interview is slightly different from the previous ones in that a complete family was interviewed and, to gain better rapport with the ladies, Anne Browning took part as well as Alan. To make it quite clear, the Thompson family comprises Michael (Comet 117) and Diana (Comet 50) with their son Simon (Comet 188) and daughter Juliet (Comet 65). If you have travelled away from your club, you will probably have met them at southern open meetings or championships because they attend a great number. Their home club is Crawley Mariners, of which Diana is the Comet class captain. The racing at Crawley is all on handicap but they separate out the Comet results. In addition to the four Comets, Michael helms a Miracle, with Diana crew, both at their club and travelling to the Miracle Nationals every year.

Alan Browning: I would like you to give an account of how the family came into sailing generally and Comet sailing in particular.

Diana: We've not been sailing very long, and we very nearly didn't start at all! A year after we got married we went on holiday on the Broads and we towed a sailing dinghy behind the motor cruiser. Michael took us out in it, he'd always wanted to sail, and we just sat there for an hour! Michael said that you have to be patient and wait for the wind, but then we lifted the centreboard and we began to move, it had been stuck in the mud! I said to Michael that this is the most boring hobby out and I resisted sailing for the next 20 years.

Then in 1987, we went on a dinghy sailing holiday in the Med and I had quite a bit of fun in a Topper. The following year Simon started to learn to sail at Plymouth Polytechnic and as Michael did not want him to get a head start, I finally gave in and we took up an offer from friends, who had been trying to persuade me for 15 years, to join them at Crawley Mariners. We started off in March 1989 by doing the RYA Level 1 and 2 at the club and thoroughly enjoyed it. At this time Juliet was doing her A-levels and had these and other things on her mind.

Simon: Yes, I had been on a week's course at Rockley Point whilst still at school; then started to take a more serious interest whilst at Polytechnic and joined the sailing club. They were running the RYA courses through to level 3; although they were not that well organised, so I did not get the certificate. The instruction was good though and the winds were mostly force 4, so we had an exciting time sailing Larks and Wayfarers.

Diana: After the course we ordered a Miracle, but they took such a long time to finish it that, when Comet 50 came up on the notice board for sale, we bought it so that we could keep practising. We had looked at Steve Kibble's boat and Robin Ballam's boat and had decided that the Comet was the boat that suited our family. A woman could sail it, a man could sail it, two people could sail it. We've always thought that the versatility of the Comet was under-advertised. It's a good family boat for varying weights. Then, when Simon came home from college he used to sail it and race it whilst we (Michael and I) went on to do RYA level 3.

Simon was getting really interested so we bought 188. Michael and Simon went away to the Sutton Bingham Nationals that year (1992) but I didn't want to go just to spectate, so I went to look at 117, a lovely boat in beautiful condition. We also rang up the man who wanted to sell 65, but it was showing its age. However, its combi-trailer was excellent and Simon needed one, so we bought both those boats. Michael did up 65 and Juliet now has that one. So that was how we came to buy four Comets. As you see we had not done much sailing, except on the RYA courses, before we came to the Comet. We're not buying any more, the dog's not interested!



Alan: Three of you have been firmly involved in racing Comets, rather than cruising for fun, what do each of you particularly enjoy in Comet racing ?

Michael: I'm naturally competitive and the Comet lends itself to a range of age and weight, so it is possible for anyone to get into the top ten. The class as a whole is very friendly and this attracted us.

Diana: There are 5 ladies who race regularly at our club (sailing Mirror, Gull, Topper and 2 Comets) and we thoroughly enjoy sailing against each other. Among the ladies, I know that if I win I've done well and know that I'm improving. In the Comet fleet, we always have 2 or 3 Comets on the water and they jokingly say that if the three Thompsons turn up there's enough for a race anyway. Like Juliet I'm not very good in the thick of it, but I'm becoming more confident. I had a few nasty accidents on the run when I first had the Comet. Andrew Simmons had never seen anybody hanging on for dear life like me, kneeling in the back with a terrified look on my face! But I'm not as frightened of it now, I'm beginning to enjoy it.

I think that racing Comets is a sport that you can do to quite an advanced age. I wonder who the oldest Comet sailor is?

Simon: I'm only ten and a half stone, so if I had a Laser I'd be overpowered a lot of the time. I've not been sailing that long, and I like to focus on one thing and I think the Comet is perfect for my weight. So, when I left college, I bought 188 from my parents and am devoting my time to learning to sail it to the best of my ability, hopefully one day I will do really well. I enjoy racing because it's a challenge, both physical and mental - on the mental side some people have likened it to chess on the water.

Juliet: I've not really raced much, but have crewed twice for Simon in the Miracle Nationals, I had not been sailing long and coping with the spinnaker was new to me. The sea was very rough too! In the Comet, to get into racing, I need just to join in on the end and build up my confidence gradually, but at the moment I prefer recreational sailing.

Alan: Diana, you are I know very influential in stimulating the growth of the Comet fleet at Crawley Mariners, particularly among the young sailors. How many Comets are in the club now and have you any advice on how to encourage the growth of a club fleet?

Diana: We've got about 27 Comets and a fairly good nucleus and we nearly reached 30 but lost a few. But building up the fleet was easy in some ways because when a number of Comet sailors did well, some of the lighter Laser sailors changed to the Comet. The only problem at present is that you can't get hold of second-hand boats for the youngsters at a price their parents can afford. Many youngsters graduate from Toppers to Lasers and find they can't handle them in stronger winds. I feel that the Comet is such a good transition boat but its price is unfortunately against it.

I always write something in the club newsletter about events at home and away which helps to keep up the interest in the class. I also do as much as I can to help club members buy, sell and try out Comets. Then it's just a matter of being enthusiastic and encouraging Comet sailors to get on the water as much as possible.

Anne Browning: Diana, have you any comments on ladies sailing Comets ?

Diana: The biggest problem I've found is getting in again after a capsized. I've discussed this with Andrew Simmons and Barrie and Margaret Hylton, because when you're older it's not so easy, even with the grab rails. I think I've finally cracked it but I still can't get it up from an inversion. Barrie reckons that I need a more buoyant buoyancy aid that will hold me higher in the water so that I can get up on to the boat when it's inverted. Also when it's reefed it's harder to get up because it comes up too fast and goes over the other way.

I have found the Comet class very supportive to me, in particular the other ladies. Everyone was so good to me when I first sailed on the sea at Gunfleet. I do actually like sailing on the sea now. I think the Comet is a bit wide for a small woman, if you're short, there's a problem hiking out. I put my foot on the dagger board to push myself out. I've also found that it's a nice easy boat to rig, except for putting in the mast, which I don't do unless the wind is very light.

Michael: I do not think it is really a question of male and female, anyone who is short, light in weight or less physically able, will obviously be at a disadvantage in some situations.

Anne: Juliet, what do you think of Comet sailing ?

Juliet: I'll get there eventually, I do sometimes sail it at Crawley. I feel differently from Simon. Simon knows that sailing the Comet is what he wants to do rather than any other sport. I enjoy other things a lot, painting and reading especially, and I know that sailing takes up a lot of time to do seriously, so that if I'm going to get into it, I must make sacrifices. I have done level 1, but have no plans to do more courses, yet.

Alan: Michael, you have taken three Comets to open meetings quite a number of times now, what transport method do you use and what problems have you had ?

Michael: We tow two of them on a specially made double trailer and put the other on top of the towing vehicle. We tow with a 1.6 litre Sierra or a motor caravan. With the Sierra it's not much of a problem, we use an Easi-Loader. With the motor caravan it's more difficult owing to the height, we need to use a step ladder. The spars go on racks on the double trailer and the sails etc inside the towing vehicle.

Diana: My boat goes on the lower position on the trailer and I can put it in the trailer without help.

Michael: The upper one on the trailer is not difficult, you just put the bow on it, lift from the stern and slide it on. The



tricky but is the boat on top of the motor caravan. It helps if there are walls to stand on, as we have at home, but if not, then I lift the bow on to the rear roof bar, whilst standing on a step ladder; then Simon, who has been holding the stern up, pushes it forward whilst I 'lift' it past the blocks and cleats. I then swap with Simon who climbs up to the front of the roof and pulls the hull forward - lifting at the same time to clear the fan-light. (Diana: Juliet and I stand there petrified because neither of us are tall enough to help). Michael: Usually though, we get offers of help for which we are grateful, as it makes it a less risky operation.

Alan: Simon, you've done pretty well in Comet competition, especially more recently. Have you any tips for us that have enabled you to get to the front?

Simon: Fortunately, I seem to be progressing, although slowly, but I can't really say why. I can't give out this magic tip and say "well, if you do this then you'll jump to the front of the fleet. For me I make sure I've got a good level of fitness, because then I don't have to worry about pulling muscles. Concentration has let me down in the past. I used to get good starts and then went backwards through the fleet. I put that down to not focussing on the race. Now I'm not starting so well but I can sail faster. At ICI I started last with John Windibank and then I crept through the fleet to 4th.

My progress is probably due to lots of little things I've picked up. In all the opens I've been to, people have been very supportive. Going to opens with Robin Ballam and sailing against him at our club has been good, as he has 'helped' me sharpen up my rules and tactics by catching me out on occasions but I have learnt from this and can now sometimes catch him out. Also he, and some of the older, experienced, sailors would say to me "did you know you did such-and-such - - ". A lot of it is just concentration, watching the wind all the time and keeping the boat moving. I find that the Comet doesn't seem to like being pinched as I do better when sailing very slightly off the wind and keeping a good eye on the tell-tales.

Alan: Are there any differences in the four Comets in the family?

Diana: Yes, slight differences. Michael hasn't got the race pack and we each have a slight variation on how we rig the horse.

Simon: My rope is long enough to go down to hold the toe strap up as well. Michael: I used to have the same but found that the block could get caught, so I now use a separate rope for the toe-strap, which I tie off to the rudder stock. Diana: My rope is so long that it goes down to the toe-strap, up again and I have a bit out at the back to hang on to if I want to try to get back in; also I noticed one Comet sailor using a very loose horse in light winds. I had been tying it too tight and that apparently stalls the sail.

Diana: On the subject of ropes, some helms in our club have very short outhaul ropes. This means that they can't reef the sail. This is a pity because one of the beauties of the Comet is that, having no battens, it is, with a long enough outhaul rope, very easy to reef and that means that you can still go out in atrocious winds.

Alan: What of the future for the Comets in the Thompson family ?

Michael: 1st 2nd and 3rd at the Nationals! But seriously, for me it's to continue to do as well as possible.

Diana: I like being Comet class captain, it's fun, but I want to go on sailing one as long as possible - - - then buy a Gull.

Simon: Continue progressing really, my first goal being to win an open. Of course, Guy Wilkins is the man I'd really like to beat, but there are other challenges too, Jake Sutton is a bit untouchable at the moment, though I've occasionally been in front of him. Then there are all those others who are usually in front of me!

Juliet: Who knows?

Alan: Thanks for the chat, Anne and I have had a very pleasant evening with you.

## PERIHELION

The Greeks have a word for it

The words 'comet', 'perihelion' and 'aphelion' all have their origin in Greek. Hearing someone having difficulty in pronouncing perihelion, I looked up my dictionary.

Perihelion: helios means the Sun and peri means round about, hence the nearest point of the comet orbit to the Sun. I was not in at the birth of the Comet dinghy, but I suppose this symbolises the nearest point of Comet Association Members to the Committee. You should pronounce each syllable: PE-RI-HE-LI-ON.

Aphelion: means away from the Sun, hence the farthest point in the comet orbit, appropriate to our indefatigable travellers to far away open meetings. The pronunciation is A-FE-LI-ON.

Comet: Actually means 'long-haired', presumably referring to the long tail of a heavenly comet rather than to the appearance of our sailors!

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in December 1995. Contributions to me by the end of November please.

Alan Browning, Editor



## GLOSSOP OPEN

Glossop & District Sailing Club's first Comet open meeting took place on Saturday 3rd June 1995, in weather conditions more reminiscent of the winter we all thought had been left well behind. In cold and very windy conditions with the cloud down on the hills, 15 boats took to the water at the start of a day which was to see many thrills and spills before the final positions were decided.

I would have liked to provide a blow-by-blow account of each race, but it is very difficult when it's all you can do to hang on at the tail end!!

Enough of this. What you all really want to know is who won. . .

1	248	Nathan Poulton	Glossop
2	277	Philip Bradey	Sheffield Viking
3	474	John Bradburn	Elton
4	650	Philip Hossell	Evesham
5	648	Brian Hamilton	Redesmere
6	331	Steve Heyes	Redesmere

My thanks go to everyone who helped make the day such a success, and we are now looking forward to next year.

Stuart Gilder (Comet 585)

## ICI OPEN

The ICI Slough open meeting at Taplow on 24th June attracted 13 visitors and an entry of 18. The forecast gave us cause to think we might have had sunshine and a fresh easterly, the best wind for Taplow Lake. The reality was cloud and a fresh northerly which, by coming over a railway embankment, provided interesting, and difficult to predict, shifts. Nonetheless, the conditions produced good racing with help from a wind strong enough for some knockdowns but not enough to bring the rescue boat into service.

Jake Sutton was unbeatable on the day by winning all three races and, out of a total of 23 laps, led at the end of 19. Second and third places were fought out between Tony Best and Alex Reeve, the final score being two seconds and one third to Best and one second and two thirds to Reeve. Everyone else enjoyed themselves with their own races behind these three!

Overall results:

1	642	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
2	625	Tony Best	ICI, Slough
3	273	Alex Reeve	ICI, Slough
4	188	Simon Thompson	Crawley Mariners
5	303	Derek Coleman	Sutton Bingham
6	565	Richard Smallwood	Shearwater

## AYLESBURY OPEN



(Photo: Annalore Kettle)

Fifteen visitors representing 7 clubs joined 14 home boats at Aylesbury Sailing Club for the Comet open meeting on 23rd July, a hot sunny day with the wind force 3 and gusting.

The overall winner was Jake Sutton. He fought off Alex Reeve to win the first race, but in the second he pulled ahead from Alex to win the race by a wide margin. In the last race Jake took second place to Tony Best, who was under constant pressure from Jake but managed to keep ahead.

Derek Coleman had his best result in the second race when he finished 4th, behind John Windibank. Henry Jagers was back on form in the last race when he came in 3rd.

Christine Stack was first among 7 ladies and finished 12th overall. David Timson, the first of 4 juniors, was 16th in the overall results.

### Overall results:

1	642	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
2	273	Alex Reeve	ICI, Slough
3	625	Tony Best	ICI, Slough
4	555	John Windibank	Chipstead
5	500	Henry Jagers	Staunton Harold
6	370	Rob Kerry	Aylesbury
1st Lady:	453	Christine Stack	Aylesbury
1st Junior:		David Timson	Aylesbury

Margaret Hylton (Comet 669)



## CHASE OPEN

Comet sailors travelled from all directions (Cheshire, Slough, Mid-Wales and Derbyshire) to join the Single-Handed Open Meeting at the Chase Sailing Club in Staffordshire on 9th July 1995. The sun shone brightly and the wind blew strong. Over 70 boats were in competition with individual starts for Lasers, Solos, Comets (12) and Toppers (including many National Team members). Many of us found the wind gusting just a bit too strongly for our own comfort.

The Comet racing was dominated by Alex Reeve who won all three races, leading virtually from start to finish. The first race saw Errol Edwards gaining second place ahead of Philip Hossell while the rest of us had plenty of swimming practise.

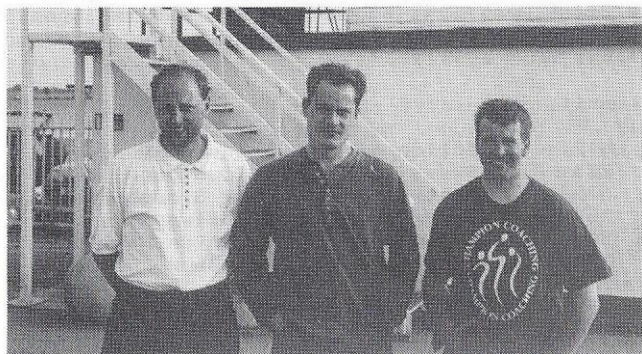
Errol retired in the second race giving second place to Philip with Tony Best in third.

The main interest in the third race was the fight for second and third overall and Philip and Errol battled it out all the way round. The head-to-head went all the way to the finish line as Philip just clinched it.

### Results:

1	573	Alex Reeve	ICI, Slough
2	650	Philip Hossell	Evesham
3	334	Errol Edwards	Chew Valley
4	625	Tony Best	ICI, Slough
5	670	P Hayes	Redesmere
6	644	Nigel Ford	Chase

Nigel Ford (Comet 644 and Duo 93)



Left to right: Philip Hossell, Alex Reeve, Errol Edwards

## FLUID FLOW PART 3: LOW SPEED HULL DRAG

The drag of a hull is the resistance to its motion through the water and comes from several sources. If you pull your Comet along on soft, dry sand, you will pull against the drag due to the friction of the particles of sand rubbing against one another and against your hull. If there were no drag it would be more like pulling your boat along on an ice rink. Let's get one thing straight right away, fluid drag is nothing like sand drag, it is not friction at all, nothing rubs on anything else. What is important with hull drag are viscosity, turbulence and waves. (You may remember that last time I mentioned another kind of drag, induced drag of the sail, and this will certainly apply to your dagger board and rudder, but not to the hull).

At low speed, the drag of your hull is of two kinds, skin drag and wake drag. In this issue I will not talk about high speeds, when, below planing speed, the most important drag is wave drag.

### Skin drag

Skin drag is caused by the viscosity of the water. As I explained last time, a fluid of great viscosity takes a long time to pour out of a container, and the viscosity of water, while being not great, is not zero either and it is very important. Viscosity makes the layer of water microscopically close to the hull stick to it. From your viewpoint in the boat, that water does not move, but a little way away the water moves past at boat speed (the 'mainstream'). The layer of water where this change of speed takes place is called the boundary-layer and normally around our boat this is very thin, no more than about 1 mm.

Boundary-layers exist around everything and are not always thin. On large aircraft and ships they can be several centimetres thick and you already know that on a large lake in light wind they can be as thick as your mast length. You might be interested to watch out for evidence of boundary-layers (eg leaves on the ground moving slower than the wind, bath foam liquid staying longer than you expect on the bottom when you turn on the tap).

Getting back to skin drag, you can visualise what the water is doing inside the boundary-layer by holding a pack of cards in your hands and make them slither on one another so that the side view becomes more and more diamond-shaped. This deformation is called shear, and the viscosity resists it, the layer very near to the hull giving the skin drag. What I have described is a laminar boundary-layer, the fluid moving in layers or laminates. Boundary-layers can be turbulent too, with the water in them rotating in all directions, and (take my word for it) this will give greater skin drag.

As the water flows past your hull, the boundary-layer thickens. It is also likely to change from laminar to turbulent, and roughness of the surface will encourage this, so that from this point of view it is best to polish your hull. I can't tell you how far along your hull transition to turbulence will occur, but if I wanted to find out I would coat the bottom with an oily substance, of contrasting colour, and, after sailing, see where the turbulence had rubbed it off. Look at your hull, if you haven't cleaned it recently, you might find evidence already there. Skin drag is proportional to the speed and also proportional to the



area of contact (the "wetted area") and this is why you can reduce the skin drag by heeling the boat .

#### Wake drag

The wake is the tail of disturbed water behind your hull. Wake drag is concerned with the flow both inside and outside the boundary-layer. Outside the boundary-layer, the water will flow faster at the middle of hull than at the stem or stern. As everybody knows, Bernoulli's theorem tells us that the pressure will fall and rise again at the stern. Unfortunately, higher pressure at front gives drag but that at the rear it is helping to push you along, and the combined effect is zero drag (as the early researchers discovered to their chagrin).

What happens though is that somewhere along the hull the flow usually separates. This is not by any means a vacuum (which does occur round high speed ship propellers but will not concern us here). The mainstream flow separates from the surface and in effect the boundary-layer, probably turbulent by now, thickens and becomes a wake of turbulent water. You will find that you are dragging along the bit of wake nearest to you and, further behind, the wake will mix with the rest of the water. Where the flow is separated, the pressure is constant, and you lose the push of the aft pressure rise, hence the wake drag. Worse, Bernoulli's theorem also says that the change of pressure is proportional to the square of the speed, ie if you double the speed the drag goes up 4 times, unlike the skin drag which would only double. So, as boat speed increases, we can expect wake drag to become more important than skin drag.

About 60 years ago there was a big interest in "streamlining" of cars, trains and aircraft, removing lumps and bumps on the surfaces and, if possible, using long thin shapes. Streamlining helps to push the separation further back and if it can be pushed right to the back, the wake drag will be very little. If we sail with the transom out of the water, the part of our Comet hull that is in the water will be very "streamlined" and only 4 inches deep, so the wake is not likely to be big. Have a look at your wake to see how wide it is, even if it has some width, remember that it is only an inch or two deep.

In theory, and in practise, when the boundary-layer is turbulent, it turns out that separation tends to be further aft and the wake smaller, giving less drag. This is true for example with fat things like golf balls and cricket balls, indeed the indentations on golf balls are there deliberately to ensure a turbulent boundary-layer, but if our Comet wake is already narrow, making it even narrower is not likely to make much difference. So I do not recommend taking the coarse sandpaper to your hull!

The Comet wake drag may be small, but if we dig in the transom, the stern is the widest part and we will lose any helpful push.

As with my previous articles on fluid flow, these concepts are by no means new, (at least 50 years old) I'm merely trying to put them over simply, and in a relevant way to the Comet.

Alan Browning (Comet 361)

## IN BRIEF

### Congratulations time

Congratulations to Captain Comet (as he is known locally) alias Glynn Jung (Comet 554) on his recent election to Commodore of Mudeford Sailing Club.

### Mudeford Week '95

Mudeford Week '95 was much enjoyed by the 4 Comet sailors who participated in the glorious week of sunshine and sailing, and we look forward to being joined by more like-minded persons next year. I can't remember who the other two Comet sailors were, I should have paid more attention at the time! However, I was attending to Glynn's transom for most of the time - most annoying! He came 2nd overall in the handicap fleet.

Ann Hooper (Comet 43)

### Mast sleeve

In my efforts to encourage a lady at my club to sell her Graduate and buy a Comet I showed her how to put the Comet mast in and said that it needed a little practise to get the hang of doing it easily.

Then she saw how three of our 4 Comets were left for some days, in our very dry weather, with masts up and sails wrapped on them and she asked whether she could keep a Comet like that all the time, making a fabric sheath to protect the sail and putting it on and off by laying the boat on its side at the jetty. I replied that, as she often could sail mid-week when few people were around, doing that was quite feasible and would not inconvenience others and that the burgee could be fitted/removed at the same time.

I pointed out that the cover would look a bit messy at the front, but if she wanted to she could use one of her old Grad covers, or perhaps modify a Comet cover by cutting a slit from stem to mast.

Storing a Comet, for a few weeks, with its mast up could make a great difference if you have temporary back pain (which happened to me a couple of months ago) and perhaps Comet Dinghies could offer mast sheaths and slit covers for those of us who are not so good at the sewing.

Alan Browning (Comet 361)

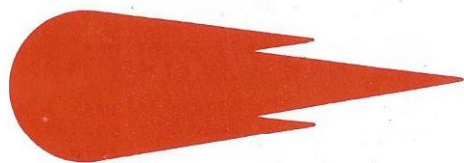
### Video of Inland Championships - 1995:

During the Inland Championships at Sutton Bingham, one of their members came to check his boat and brought his video camera in case there was some interesting action in the strong winds (he was unaware that the Championships were in progress). The result was a ten minute video, which is obtainable from the photographer, Mike Dodd-Noble, on 01935 826539, price £10 (inclusive of postage and packing). Mike's address is:

Parrett productions, Parrett Works, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6AE

Norah Gould





# **Comet Class Association**

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association