



NEWSLETTER NUMBER 43
SUMMER 1997

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Front cover:

Keith Lamdin winning the 1986 Nationals
(Photo: David Hudson)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, this is it! My last Chairman's Report, no more grey hairs for Alan as he tries to extract a report from me on time! But never mind, I was consistent to the last and was late again. My current pet phrases are: "all we have is now" and "life goes on from here" and so life, in its usual perverse way, reminds me that now and again you need to look back and reflect.

My first Chairman's report was in the Autumn Perihelion of 1992, and looking through it I could be forgiven for thinking I was reading the Wilkins' family scrapbook. Mark and Guy have been the dominant names in the racing calendar and are still the ones to beat today. I am pleased to see that there are a lot of first class helms about these days and the racing is more competitive than ever. The numbers attending events, with a few highs and lows on the way, have been gradually increasing and the Comet is now a very well-established class.

The pleasure on the faces of first-time winners and new champions will always stay with me as will the many great personalities and acts of kindness and sportsmanship I have witnessed.

I have travelled a lot in the past 5 years, which troubles my green conscience somewhat, but it's sort of all right because I've sailed my environmentally friendly boat in some incredibly beautiful spots. I will always squirm with pleasure when remembering the screaming reaches at Steeple Bay and falling off the breakers at Gunfleet and the pleasure of lovely Sutton Bingham, peaceful Cam and all the other lovely places and people.

It occurs to me that if I carry on in this vein I'm going to run out of superlatives, and I want to save a few for the current Committee who are a great team and would be a credit to any class. They all have initiative and ideas and are prepared to give their time to making this just about the most friendly class there is. Thank you for all your help and I know you will all support the new Chairman when elected.

To make sure that this valedictory piece is a proper report, I suppose I ought to report something.

The Nationals will see us making a welcome return to Hampton Pier S.C.. They always make us welcome and their organisation and facilities are first class. My memories of the sailing there are legion, mostly of the incredible capsizing and waltzing with the finishing post: I wonder if the marks I left on the post are still there!

Don't forget the AGM and get your nominations to Norah, and, apart from the Chairman, all the Committee are standing again.

New rules have sent us oldies reaching for our spectacles to confirm that the younger generation aren't as sensible as ours ie "I can't believe it!" But we are all trying to give them a go and the same people seem to be at the front of the fleet.

One tricky problem in the rules, highlighted by Mike Thompson, is that there can be scoring ties in some circumstances. The Committee held an impromptu meeting and agreed to put to the AGM that "discarded results can be used to separate tie situations should they arise".

My last word on the Mino (it's someone else's problem now). There has never been an approach to me on this issue by any top helm or "sharp end brigade" and by top helm I mean those helms who win championships or open meetings. The sailors and good qualified enthusiastic sailors at that, who have spoken out against the Mino rig being regarded as a Comet, are those who, when they assess the wind before sailing, sometimes choose to reef. The Committee based its decision on the rules and a desire to encourage Comet and Mino sailors, not on any attempt to being "macho".

Well, there it is, I hope when I've more time I will be able to help the class again, and I will still be out there enjoying sailing my lovely Comet.

John Windibank, Chairman.

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

NORTHERN AREA

Chester

- 1 500 H Jagers
- 2 650 P Hossell
- 3 633 J Edwards
- 4 670 P Hayes
- 5 508 M Smith
- 6 331 S Heyes

WESTERN AREA

Shearwater

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 700 J Windibank
- 3 159 J Challener
- 4 418 N Cross
- 5 650 P Hossell
- 6 707 D Coleman

EASTERN AREA

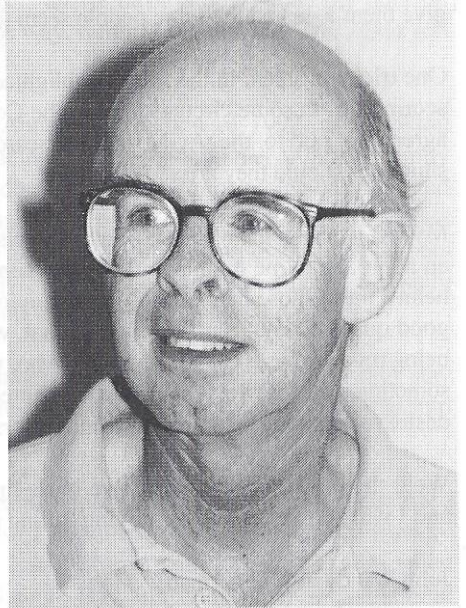
Fishers Green

- 1 188 S Thompson
- 2 657 M Wilkins
- 3 700 J Windibank
- 4 707 D Coleman
- 5 427 K Moody
- 6 711 B Welham

The remainder of the "First six" results are on page 22.

TALKING TO ... KEITH LAMDIN

Alan Browning: Newcomers to the Comet scene will see your name in the "Hall of Fame" as the fourth National Champion, but some people sailing Comets today may not be aware of what you did for the Association in those early days. Indeed, you were I believe the first Chairman of the Association, holding that post until 1990 and combining it with the post of Newsletter Editor for the first 12 issues of Perihelion. Those issues contained your five "sailing your Comet" articles now being reproduced in booklet form. You did not relax when you came off the Committee but produced four "Racing your Comet" articles and five "Know the Rules" articles, which must have occupied a lot of your time in the period up to 1992. So all in all you have had a considerable influence on the Association and Perihelion for over half of their existence. And of course you now write the "Racing Rules Clinic" articles when we ask you things and do not hesitate to contribute in other ways when you feel it necessary.



Keith Lamdin: Strictly I wasn't the first Chairman of the Association. Just before I bought Comet 55, in the middle of 1985, there was a little general meeting at the Crystal Palace dinghy show and they formed the Association then. I believe the chairman was a lady doctor from Kent. Chris Robertson, also from Kent, was elected secretary and Andrew Cowser, treasurer. To the best of my knowledge at that time the Association wasn't doing much. In 1983 and 1984 there had been two National Championship meetings at Gunfleet, where the first grouping of boats was. In those days there were no open meetings, just the Championships. The 1985 Championships were held at Queen Mary reservoir, just after I had bought my Comet, and, although I went there, I watched from the bank because it was blowing a force 6 and I didn't feel inclined to start learning how to sail my Comet just then! I was very glad I didn't sail because the event was run by one of

those too enthusiastic people who set a course that took over two hours to complete! There were 7 or 8 boats sailing and in that kind of wind all the helms were absolutely shattered.

The next year the Association was let down at fairly short notice on a location for the National Championships and I suggested they hold the event at my own club, Aylesbury. I was lucky for in those days we used to have a short Summer's break in August. The club was agreeable, we managed to drum up over 20 boats and it was quite a successful week-end. For my sins I happened to win it, which was perhaps lucky having it at Aylesbury, and I thought I'd better volunteer to help Andrew (Simmons) get the Association going. I became chairman then and both Chris Robertson and Andrew Cowser were prepared to carry on and of course Andrew Simmons got heavily involved in those early days. Andrew Simmons gave us the draft constitution and measurement rules and we took it from there. The big thing was to get affiliation to the RYA because without that we could not get a proper stand at the dinghy show. Previously the stand had been outside in the cold, that's where I first saw a Comet.

Alan: I believe we must thank the Graduate Class Association for much of your expertise in sailing administration because you were involved with them before you took up with Comets. What made you come into Comets ?

Keith: Ultimately what made me come into Comets was lack of a crew. I go back to the mid-50s when dad started Aylesbury Sailing Club. I was brought up sailing Cadets and crewing for him in the Graduate. I used to sail Fireflies, National 12s, anything I could lay my hands on, but they were all crewed boats, that's what we had in those days. Then I sailed on and off for 30 years, apart from 6 years out when I was in the Merchant Navy and didn't do much sailing in this country. Then I came back and got into sailing seriously in the 70s when I was on the Graduate Committee and also the Committee at Aylesbury. But in the mid 80s Joanna decided that horses were more interesting than boats and boys were more interesting than horses, so one way or another I no longer had a crew. I decided that I just wanted a boat, in fact I decided that I wasn't going to race any more, I just wanted a boat that I could go down to the club, rig on my own, launch on my own and sail on my own without needing any help. I'd first seen a Comet sailing down at Gunfleet when we bought the flat there. I looked out and saw this small single-hander popping around on the water and thought that looks a nice little boat. It seemed to be well-built and well laid out. I had had a look at all the others, the Streaker, the Lightning, and decided that the Comet was the one for me. I remember Henry Jaggars, when he first bought Comet 100, saying "it looks right". That's exactly what the Comet does, it looks right. It's physically very well-built, you won't find a better built boat of that size, and it has everything you need just to sail it.

I had to wait until Aylesbury introduced a handicap class before I could bring the Comet into the club. Mine was the first Comet at Aylesbury and I started racing it, as you do, even though I hadn't intended to. I started doing fairly well in it and suddenly there were people at Aylesbury buying Comets in all directions, we now have over 30. What it did at Aylesbury was to pick up a number of ladies who had been sailing Toppers, who wanted something just slightly bigger but not anything that was going to overpower them. It picked up a number of men about my size, who didn't want a Laser or anything too powerful but for whom the Topper was too small. There were also one or two youngsters, and that's the mix that you get in the class today.

Alan: There don't seem to be many youngsters about now.

Keith: No, they seem to have tailed off. In the early days we had a lot of youngsters, a lot of very good youngsters, but of course they're all grown up now. At Aylesbury we had Damon Perrin, the Robinson brothers and James Withall, they were very strong. The youngsters will come again, these things always go in circles.

Alan: I expect in the early days, when the Association was growing fast, it was exciting wasn't it ?

Keith: Yes it was. It quickly became somewhat bigger than perhaps I had expected. The Comet had been on the market for 5 years when I bought number 55, so the yearly sales had been only about 10 boats a year and very few people knew the Comet. I think Andrew did a super job in terms of designing and building the boat but he didn't have the experience of sailing clubs and the open meeting circuit. I had been going round the open circuit for years and it wasn't too difficult to start thinking about organising a few open meetings. Ralph Rowe wrote an article once on how I twisted his arm to get a meeting at Chipstead. Once we'd taken a decent number of boats down to Chipstead, that started that fleet going. Then Henry bought a Comet and got Kingsmead going, and it mushroomed from there. Steve Kibble bought number 144 and started the fleet at Crawley Mariners. It wasn't difficult. It took a fair amount of work, but none of the work was very difficult. I thought it was important to have a newsletter to try and keep people informed about what was going on, and that took a little time. Luckily, Andrew Simmons was very prepared to pay for things like the copying and the postage and that helped us a lot in the early days. It helped him too and I suppose the thing that helped Andrew most, after getting the Association off the ground, was when Margaret Hylton, and subsequently her husband Barrie, got involved as his agents. Margaret was a Topper sailor and Barrie had a very nice GP14. I think Margaret felt there was an opportunity for the Comet as a boat that fitted well between the Topper and the Laser and I think even she was a bit surprised at how well it did take off. She put an awful lot of effort into going to clubs, demonstrations days and all the exhibitions. If people 'phoned up and

wanted a trial sail she'd always take a boat over. To be fair, Andrew did that a lot too, I had a trial sail with Andrew before I decided to buy, but Margaret just had so many contacts. She knew everybody in the Topper fleet all round the country. Then Barrie got more and more involved in doing repairs and it just built up and built up. I think they were the most important single element in the growth of the class in the 80s and early 90s.

Alan: Part of their attraction to buyers was their position in the country.

Keith: Yes, Andrew always has had the disadvantage that he had to do a lot of travelling to get anywhere. I suppose the growth in the south east partly reflected the fact that there are a great number of gravel pit sailing clubs in the south east where the Comet is ideally suited, and I suppose it also reflected the fact that I knew people around the south east too. It was always a concern in the early days that we hadn't enough boats in the midlands and up north. We had a few people who used to come down, Will Turner from Uttoxeter, Brian Hardy from Chester way, but we've struggled to move north. There are more there now, recently we've had well-attended meetings, particularly at Glossop and Staunton Harold. But we're still based firmly in the south east.

I think it's a great shame Andrew taking over the distribution of the Comet. I can understand some of the problems from his point of view, the growth in Comet sales had begun to slow down, so obviously the profit in the business was reducing, and costs were going up all the time, as they seem to do. I think in the long term he will miss the Hyltons very greatly, but it is his business and he has to take the responsibility for it, the way the class will grow must be through new boat sales. There will always be a second-hand market, indeed, in the early days the biggest problem we had was the lack of second-hand boats.

Alan: I have the feeling that the Comet was first designed principally as a fun boat for car-topping on holidays and the racing capability came later.

Keith: I think there's an element of truth in that. As I understand it, Andrew's father had a business that was to do with plastics and Andrew came into building glass fibre boats on the back of that business. Certainly production in the first 5 years was very slow and the majority were used for pottering about. I imagine many still are, for only about half of the boat owners are in the Association, but that is a good proportion compared with other classes. There is a lot of racing going on, and I think there's still a lot of racing going on at club level for people who don't want the trouble of travelling to open meetings, but still there's another group of people who have Comets and sail them happily just socially and on holidays. We've never been able, as an association, to really accommodate those people particularly well. We did organise a social event down at Chichester, in what's called Federation week,

but the take-up on that was pretty poor. I did suggest to John Windibank a couple of years ago that it might be worth trying for a social event, perhaps at Bala week, with the Comet Nationals and maybe even the Duo Nationals there as well. Bala is a lovely water to sail on. It would need quite a lot of organisation but I'd like to see it done. I'm more and more keen to see links between owners of all the types of Comet dinghy, Comet single-hander, Duo and Trio, with a fairly firm link between the associations. How you organise this is another matter. The link has up to now been an informal one, and the biggest part has been the Hyltons because they were heavily involved in the Duo.

Alan: What were the most rewarding achievements in the early days ?

Keith: I think just seeing the Association grow and seeing the number of boats grow and the number of Comet owners at the clubs grow. It was a very friendly association from day 1, it still is and I think that's a very important part of it. We've tried to keep the racing keen and competitive but within reasonable and civilised bounds, and we stepped pretty heavily on any signs of misbehaviour, which I think was a very good principle. We always, and particularly in the early days, had quite a shore-based group, of ladies in particular, who would come with their families and so on while we were all out sailing. It just made it a nice social class to be with. We have the Wilkins family, the Thompson family, and in the early days there were the Crawshaws and the Adlingtons. Although we all tried on the water, we also tried not to let it get too serious, and I hope we can keep that kind of style. The Lasers are a very cut-throat class to sail in and I wouldn't like to see that attitude in the Comets. But having said that, if you're going to be competitive you've got to do it properly. You can't win races in dinghies unless you are competitive, but you can do it in a way that keeps everybody friendly and happy at the same time, and that's the ideal.

Alan: I expect that in some aspects progress was difficult, what were those ?

Keith: I think the difficulties are, as in any organisation, that it's just a minority of people who've got either the time or the inclination to do the work. Certainly in the first two or three years I guess I went somewhere pretty well every week-end. I spent a lot of time obviously on the newsletters and a lot of time on the telephone. And I struggled to encourage others to get involved with running the Association. They did, slowly. People like Jackie Hudson organising the prizes for us, her husband David who took a lot of the photographs. And then obviously John Windibank and Henry and people like that. I suppose the biggest disappointment has been the almost refusal of people to send in material for the newsletter. You know the problem as well as I do. **Alan:** I threatened to write something myself. **Keith:** Exactly, that's exactly what I did, but it would be so nice to have more general stories about people sailing Comets, rather than just open meeting reports and racing items. We've had one or two people

taking them abroad, but they are very much in the minority. Committee work is really a matter of time and effort. I know John has found that as well. You can put in an unlimited amount of time and effort and other things in your life are being left. You can't do that for long. After about four years I thought I had done enough and I also think that if you have the same person at the helm for too long things become rather stale. It took a little while to find a new chairman, but we found John and he's done a super job. In changing chairman you get a fresh face, and some new ideas come forward and the class takes another step. I think that's important.

I think the Association has gone from strength to strength, I really do. I think it's improved in all aspects. You've got the regional trophies now, you've got good turnouts at the events, the stands at the boat shows look very good, the newsletter has improved out of all recognition. The newsletter is a big job, I don't think people realise how much work there is in the newsletter. **Anne Browning:** Yes, near to going to press it really does take over our life!. **Keith:** I think it's important that the newsletter comes out on time on a regular basis. There was a difficult period in the 80s in the Graduate Association when their newsletter appeared at random, if at all, and we just lost touch with what was going on. In the Comet Association we decided early on that the newsletter would go out on time, even if it only had 10 pages. I think the newsletter has been a great success. When I started it, my newsletters were purely text documents. I was very grateful when Andrew Cowser, and then later on Stuart Lines, introduced some graphics. Then when I was winding down as chairman, Stuart kindly took on the full job of editor. At the time he was also doing a newsletter for his local church and that made him rather busy! I think people in the Association need to understand that the Committee jobs are quite time-consuming, I'm sure people appreciate the work you've done on Perihelion. When I did it I was in full employment and it took all my evenings and week-ends. But, like John, if I decide to take on a job I try to do it to the best of my ability. All along, we've never wanted to stop anybody volunteering to do whatever they wanted to help the class, but we haven't been overloaded with a stream of people coming forward. I must admit that when I stepped down from chairman I got heavily involved on the committee of the local cricket club, ending up spending just as much time there as I had with the Comet Association.

Alan: How does the standard of sailing the Comet ten years ago compare with the present ?

Keith: That's an interesting one actually. I think the standard at the very top of the fleet is roughly the same. I think people of the calibre of Craig Moffatt, Chris Sinclair and Andrew Pearce would be at the top of the fleet today. I think there is a greater strength in depth now, so that when you go down to, say, the second half dozen, and maybe the next dozen or so, the standard is very competitive. For example, at the Mudeford Tiduals, there was a group of 6 or 7 boats that were ahead,

but there was a really competitive group of another 9 boats which I think is stronger than it was ten years ago. I would say that Guy Wilkins has been the outstanding helm. He has been in a class on his own. We were lucky to attract some good helmsmen in the early days. Craig Moffatt had been National Champion in both the Fleetwind and the Solo, Andrew Pierce was a top Laser sailor and Chris Sinclair was another very good young sailor from Chipstead. Then there was Henry Jaggars, a good class helm in the Graduate fleet, especially in light winds. It was very competitive, but there wasn't the strength in depth we have now. Nowadays, if you're lying 15th, it can be a real battle to get to 14th. Mark Wilkins has come on following in Guy's footsteps. John Challenor did very well down at Mudeford, I think he'll be a real force. It's good also to see some of the longer established names still sailing very well. Robin Ballam is one, he has always been picking up the veteran's prize. John Windibank himself, who's now right at the top of the fleet. I don't suppose John will mind me saying that when he first came into the fleet he used to win a number of capsized trophies. But once he found out how to keep the boat upright he was going as fast as anyone. One of the recent things that's been very good is the number of good lady helms that have got into the fleet. We've always had some good lady helms but not usually many of them. There was Margaret Hylton and Nancy Gould in the very early days, and then Tracy Davies from Gunfleet. Hayley Penfold was another, but now we have a group of ladies all sailing extremely well. Heather Back is out front at the moment. She's had Comet 95 a long time, since new. Having good helms in the fleet has always given the rest of the fleet something to aim at, which is what you need. But there's also been the thought that your boat is as good as anybody else's, so that the only thing stopping you from getting to the front is how well you sail, how well you race, it's as simple as that.

Alan: You must have sailed the Comet on a fair number of different kinds of water, lakes, rivers, reservoirs, and the sea in various places. Which kind of water do you find most enjoyable to sail the Comet on?

Keith: That's also an interesting question because I do believe the Comet is very well suited for pretty well any water. There's no doubt that, in terms of the Portsmouth handicap, it performs better inland and on small waters than it does on big waters or on the sea. But that doesn't mean to say that it doesn't sail well on the sea, it's all relative to other classes of boat. I enjoy sailing it on a big water where you can sit out and really sail it to its maximum potential, and we've had some lovely meetings at places like Grafham Water. Maybe it's not ideal as a sea boat by virtue of its short waterline length, it is very easy to dig into a wave, particularly going downwind. But you must keep the bow out, and sail the boat up and over the waves rather than through them. I suppose the Comet does best in tight inland waters where the ability to tack so quickly gives a great advantage. You can tack on the slightest windshift knowing that you're not going to lose any boatspeed, and there's no doubt it really shines inland in light winds where the winds are fluky, where the

winds are shifting. Indeed, at Kingsmead on a couple of light wind open meetings, we've seen Comets beating Lasers on the water simply because the Comet doesn't stick when it goes absolutely calm. Of all the venues we've sailed at, I think the most challenging has been Cam. It's very narrow, the winds are shifty and you really have to be alive to what is going on there to get the best out of it. It's a shame we no longer have a meeting there for I think it was a very worthwhile venue. So I really have to say that the Comet sails well on all the waters we race it on. We had a particularly blowy Nationals at Ardleigh, but the boats got round. The only time we didn't sail as intended was at Shoreham in 1989. It was blowing about force 6 and there were big waves and it would have been too much for the majority of the fleet. We were a little worried that there might not have been sufficient rescue boats and after discussion with the coastguard, we elected to sail on the river. That replaced one set of problems with another, there were enormous windshifts round the sheds lining the river and the wind was shifting 90 degrees. With it blowing that hard it was not easy. The Comet is quite seaworthy if it's sailed properly, it takes time to learn and people have always had problems with the boat downwind, but I think that's a matter of technique more than anything. Technique and practice. The only way you'll learn to sail the Comet confidently downwind in a blow is to go and do it, to go and practise. **Alan:** But before you've done it you don't know quite what to expect. **Keith:** yes, it's the chicken and the egg, people are worried about going out to do it in the first place, but until they go out and do it they are not going to find out that it actually can be done. Any single-handed boat is going to be a bit skittish downwind but if you keep tight control on the mainsheet and you keep your weight fairly well back, and a little bit of plate, it can sail quite adequately in quite a blow, it's actually great fun doing it. It's just convincing people that that is the case. This of course brings us almost inevitably on to talking about the Mino rig.

Alan: Yes, everyone is talking about the Mino these days, how do you think it should fit into Comet racing ?

Keith: Well, the Comet was designed by Andrew Simmons to be capable of being reefed, that was part of his design philosophy, that's why there are no battens in the sail. People do reef when the going gets tough but you do find that you have to sail slightly freer when you're beating, just to keep the boat moving, rather than pinching like you can with a full sail. Downwind there's no doubt that reefing takes a little excitement out of it making it a bit easier for most people to handle. Having said that, as far as I'm aware there is no recorded instance of a reefed Comet winning a race in any conditions anywhere. The closest I know was at a particularly windy open meeting at Gunfleet, about force 6, and young James Withall, who was a lightweight, decided to reef. The other three boats in the race were using the full sail. Watching from the shore, I vividly remember John Windibank flying off the top of a wave and literally flipping in mid-air! James I think came second. That is why I am in favour of the Mino rig. I don't honestly feel that it poses a serious threat to the

leaders in open meetings or championships and if it gets more people to go and sail the boat in stronger winds and to have them on the water rather than sitting out the racing and watching other people, then as far as I'm concerned it's a good thing. I understand the issue of one-design, but I think I would be the loudest opponent of any attempt to bring something in which would make boats go faster than the existing fleet. I don't have the same concern over bringing in something which makes the boats go slower, particularly when the rules already allow reefing anyway. I believe the Mino rig can only be good for the class. It will get younger people involved, keep older people involved longer when they are less active and less nimble. We need to encourage Minos as part of the Comet class as much as we possibly can. I don't think there will ever be enough Minos for them to form an association of their own, because the Mino's performance is so similar to the Topper. I do not support a separate Portsmouth number for the Mino, they must sail off the straight Comet number. There is the advantage for the Mino of the lighter mast, but you wrote an excellent article showing how little that changed the overall sailing weight. The Mino rig is all about coping in stronger winds and many people decide not to sail if it's above force 4. If the Mino rig gets them out, let's have it!

When you provide a smaller sail, it is not going to affect the positions at the front of the fleet. I would hope that the class is big enough to allow people in the middle and back of the fleet to have that option. Personally I would prefer the option without any restrictions whatever, just let people put up the sail they are happy with. At an event, using one rig in one race and changing it for another race is fine as far as I'm concerned. I honestly don't think it will affect the overall result of any race or any series. I'm far more concerned with getting people out on the water joining in the racing. They have a built-in disadvantage in that if the wind goes light in the middle of a race, they are stuck. I hope the Comet class is still a friendly enough group of people to have the main concern being everybody's enjoyment and a secondary issue being the winners. Obviously winners want to win, but I'm suggesting that they will always win with a full rig irrespective of the Mino. I hope the class will sort itself out on this issue fairly quickly. I did suggest to the Committee that they send out a simple referendum at renewal of membership, asking whether people are in favour of the Mino being adopted as an alternative rig. I have a feeling that a referendum would show a significant majority in favour.

Sailmakers

I have actually more of an issue with Andrew Simmons making changes to the person who provides the sails. We've now had four sailmakers. Half a dozen of the very early boats had Westaway sails, then the majority of the early boats had Banks sails. Then he went on to Morrison sails and now Hyde. Now there's no doubt in my mind that that the Banks and the Morrison sails are different. The Banks sail is certainly faster in very light wind conditions and the Morrison faster in medium and strong conditions. I don't have one of the new Hyde sails but I've no doubt it will be

different again. The dimensions might be the same, but no sailmaker in the world is going to produce another sail that is exactly the same in performance. To me that is far more of an issue in relation to one-design, changing the engine is a significant element.

In the past, some owners have come along with all sorts of ideas which they thought would improve the boat. Some of them might increase the boat speed but that got out of hand at the Ardleigh AGM where I had to rule some of them out of order on account of being presented at the very last moment. It was then that the rule was approved that Andrew Simmons, as designer and builder of the boat, would have the right of veto to any proposed modifications. **Alan:** Strictly this works both ways, an AGM could choose not approve modifications that Andrew Simmons might wish to make, This however would not apply to the change of sailmaker because provision for that is already in the measurement rules. **Keith:** Yes, but I do wish that Andrew had spoken to the Class Association about it in advance, it is the biggest single one-design issue. I would have been grateful if Andrew had come to the Association and said that he had a problem with the sailmaker, outline his proposals and ask what did the Association think. We would have appreciated that. But we do understand that the Comet is his boat and his livelihood too. I've had differing reports on the Hyde sail so I must keep an open mind on it at the moment. **Alan:** In the long term the quality control, particularly with the computer cutting of sails, must be a good idea.

Keith: Yes, and Hyde sails have a good reputation generally, my suit of Musto & Hyde sails on my Graduate are probably the best I've ever had. But that's not the point, if I had three sails from three sailmakers I could choose which sail to use to suit the wind conditions. But that isn't what you want in a one-design boat.

Alan: Anything else ?

Keith: I hope the Comet will go from strength to strength, I think Andrew Simmons deserves it as the designer and builder because it is a super boat, in my view, it deserves its success. I hope we can continue to spread the word further north, that is the key part in the development. It would be nice if the entries to the National Championships were at the 50+ level, to get us into the 50+ club, but that's not critical, so long as we have a decent number attending. I'd like to see more attention paid to the 50% of owners who don't race, but I think the impetus has got to come from them rather than from the Committee. It's actually quite difficult to organise social sailing and I think the non-racers must get themselves together somehow and put forward some proposals. I would love to see that, I really would. A holiday week at somewhere like Mundeford perhaps. I'd like to see closer ties with the Duo and the Trio because I think people who sail those boats are similar in style to those who sail the Comet single-hander.

I just hope that the class will go forward. I don't want to see the Comets become as competitive as the Lasers because if they do something will be lost. But equally you do need to provide a good standard of racing to keep people's interest. That in turn helps everybody else. Whoever the new chairman is I hope that we can keep moving forward.

I do hope that Andrew doesn't regret the loss of Margaret and Barrie Hylton and I hope his business keeps its head above water. One of the difficulties of dinghy sailing in general is that there are now so many new classes it's almost impossible to believe that they will all survive. There can't be that big a market, and I don't think that's good for sailing because although handicap sailing is the norm in many clubs, there's no doubt that there's better racing in a class, preferably in a class where boatspeed is not the determining factor. It's racing between the boats that's important, rather than sheer speed. Obviously people get a lot of enjoyment out of catamarans and these new boats with asymmetrics and trapezes, but they are still a minority of dinghy sailors in this country. Most dinghies are sailed on small lakes, small rivers and small reservoirs where trapezes and spinnikers are not the things that win races. We get our enjoyment from racing at a far lower level where sheer boat speed isn't the issue.

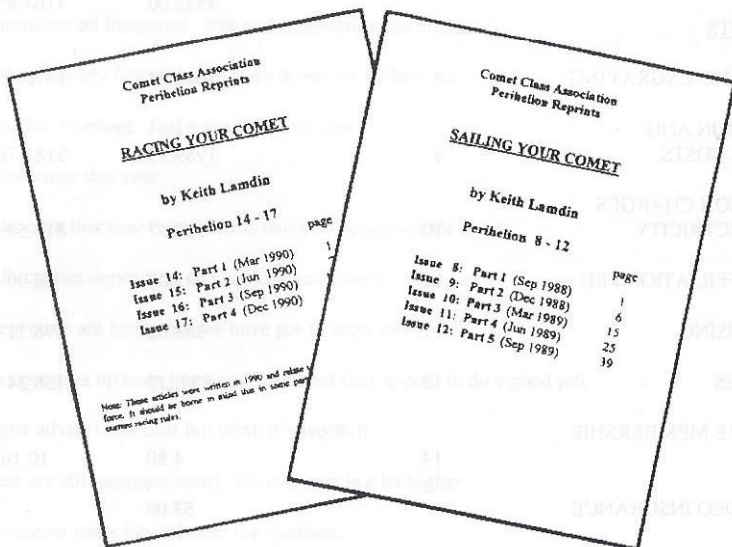
On the design of the Comet, I've put extra purchase on the kicker and outhaul but apart from that Andrew had everything right as far as I am concerned. People have talked about controls led to the side decks, but that's totally unnecessary, you can easily lean in to the centre to adjust. You've got a ratchet mainsheet block which is one of the best things he put on the boat, that really is a boon. And adjustable toe straps, what else do you need? There's no doubt that many people spend far too much time fiddling about with the controls. You're better off just setting the sail and concentrating on the racing.

It's a pity that Andrew can't use the marketing muscle that Topper and Laser can. They spend a lot of money on mass marketing that Andrew is never going to be able to afford. But in the niche between the Topper and the Laser the Comet comes into its own. Topper did come out with the Byte, but that boat has never caught on. It's not a stable boat, it's not as well-built, it is just not as good a boat as the Comet. The only change I would ever have asked for is a halyard and track to be able to raise and lower the sail from the cockpit. I did talk to Andrew about it in the early days but he worked out that it would put another £250 to £300 on the cost of the boat, which he felt was not worthwhile. A halyard would be useful at Aylesbury, where often many boats are crowded together on a jetty, tied by the bow, but at a beach or bank there is no difficulty in wrapping the sail. It is a minor point compared with the overall quality of the boat. No, I intend to sail the Comet for a long time to come, and, when I move down to Clacton, I'll be sailing it on the sea with great enjoyment.

Alan: Thanks Keith for the enjoyment we've had this afternoon in talking to you. For myself I'd looked forward to this chat for a long time and have not been disappointed.

KEITH LAMDIN'S SAILING AND RACING ARTICLES

The two booklets containing re-issues of the articles written by Keith Lamdin in 1988-90 are now ready. The titles are "Sailing your Comet" and "Racing your Comet" and they have been prepared for novices to the Comet and members who have joined the Association since that time. They have not been edited or added to in any way. I will be pleased to send them to you at a cost of £1 per booklet, which includes postage. I have produced them only on a home computer/printer facility and if the numbers requested are considerable I may have to request the use of the facilities involved in the production of Perihelion, which may lead to a greater cost.



Alan Browning, Editor

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNTS

PERIOD FROM 23rd JULY 1995 TO 31st DECEMBER 1996

<u>RECEIPTS</u>	<u>NOTES</u>	<u>94/95</u> £	<u>95/96</u> £
MEMBERSHIP FEES	1	2708.00	2460.00
COMET DINGHIES NEW BOATS	2	244.00	210.00
NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP REVENUE	3	362.00	250.00
COMMISSION ON INSURANCE	4	1085.00	1162.00
B/SOCIETY INTEREST	5	86.95	72.35
SALE OF INSERTS FOR TROPHIES ETC.	6	39.55	10.50
DONATION RE FISHERS GREEN OPEN	7	6.50	-
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		4532.00	4164.85
 <u>PAYMENTS</u>			
PRIZES AND ENGRAVING	8	1040.02	1870.45
PERIHELION AND EDITORS COSTS	9	1989.23	2181.76
EXHIBITION CHARGES AND ELECTRICITY	10	529.57	813.58
R.Y.A. AFFILIATION FEE	11	32.00	38.00
ADVERTISING	12	383.06	498.21
EXPENSES	13	137.12	156.24
ADHESIVE MEMBERSHIP LABELS	14	4.80	10.10
T.V + VIDEO INSURANCE		53.00	-
DRAYCOTE EXPENSES		40.00	-
PERSONAL ORGANISER		333.18	-
INLAND NATIONALS		150.00	-
		<hr/>	<hr/>
		4691.98	5568.34

	£		£
TOTAL PAYMENTS	5568.34	BALANCE IN B/SOC 95	2945.73
TOTAL RECEIPTS	<u>4164.85</u>	BALANCE IN B/SOC 96	<u>1506.38</u>
DEFICIT	1403.49	DEFICIT	1439.35
PETTY CASH(95)	12.20	PRIZES FLOAT	£41.10
			£ 6: 96
	<u>1391.29.</u>		<u>48.06</u>
			1391.29
D.COLEMAN (HON.TREASURER)		W.J.EDWARDS (HON.AUDITOR)	

NOTES

1. Membership 274 (95) 246 (96)
Slightly down but most boat associations are having problems
2. New Boats 24 (95) 21 (96)
Very tight industry.
3. Championship Revenue. This varies depending on agreement with club concerned.
4. Commission on Insurance. Not bad considering the market.
5. Building Society Interest. Rates are down, so we lose out.
6. Inserts for Trophies. Just a few sold this year.
7. No donations this year.
8. Looks a lot this year but in fact is two years payment for prizes.
9. This fluctuates depending on Quantity and Inserts.
10. These costs are heavy but we have got to show out.
11. The cost goes up even more next year, but they appear to do a good job.
12. Bigger advert more cost but think it's worth it.
13. These are still minimal really, the true cost is a lot higher.
14. Shows two years labels hence the increase.

As a guide there is not much between the years 95's Bank balance at the end of December was £1668 whereas the balance at the end of '96 was £1506, but in '95 I had not paid the advertising bill of £150, but at the end of '96 the increased bill of £200 odd has already been paid.

Derek Coleman, Treasurer

INLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS

Very pleasant conditions greeted the 30 competitors for their first visit to a Comet meeting at Staunton Harold Sailing Club, a little cold for the campers at night but excellent sailing conditions with plenty of wind on the Saturday, force 3 - 4. The reservoir being full, it made launching and recovery from the lawns very easy.

This report is being written by a very frustrated sailor, keen to be out there having a go but unfortunately could not as a frozen shoulder which is very painful made it impossible, but hopefully it could be better in time for the Tidal Championships next year.

I find it difficult to pick out the individual talent and follow their progress during the races, being a relatively new recruit to the Comet scene. What was so rewarding for me was to see the 30-strong fleet setting off for the first of 5 races, running down to the far end of the reservoir. As far as I know, the other fleet of 28 Solos racing on the Saturday did not interfere with the Comets but made plenty to watch from the warmth of the clubhouse. The OOD/Commodore did point out to me how well-behaved the Comet sailors were, he had been taken aback as he was used to lots of hassle and protests etc from over-keen sailors in the different fleets that have visited our club. This is a compliment to all who sailed in this event, well done!

There were several incidents of people falling out of their Comets for some reason, perhaps they just needed cooling off - Hilary Wetherdon from the host club, a new member who only learned to sail last year I believe, had at least 4 capsizes but did finish all 5 races. Well done Hilary. Phil Hossell lost it at one point, he was not sure why, must have been tired after the long beats or something, but he unfortunately hurt his back. I hope it soon gets better Phil. The most spectacular capsize was executed by Diana Thompson just in front of the clubhouse, she refused help from the rescue boat and floated/swam with her Comet into the shore before righting the boat and sailing on. What determination from this lady - we should be proud of her. The moral being - when you are down, pull yourself up, shake yourself down and do it all over again.

The racing was very tight at the front with four sailors fighting it out on the Saturday. Mark Wilkins, John Challener, Jake Sutton and David Forsdike were sailing very well on the courses the OOD had set, it was very good of him to have a gybe mark in front of the clubhouse.

On the Saturday evening a Karaoke had been arranged for a little light relief from sailing but unfortunately not many people attended although those who came enjoyed hearing others singing and making a fool of themselves. Heather Back

can not only sail well, she gave a superb performance with my elder daughter of the song "Grease lightning" with accompanying choreography, we have this on tape if ever needed! Henry Jagers also gave us a rendition of "Moon River" - he's much better at sailing, sorry Henry.

Sunday morning and the wind was very light and shifty for the two remaining races. It proved that the veterans (50+) could also sail using their long acquired skills. John Windibank and Henry Jagers each won a race but it would not put them in the overall top three, but it did show that skill can overcome youth and fitness sometimes. Well done chaps!

Mark Wilkins from Chipstead is our new Inland Champion. For the complete results, see page 23.

Staunton Harold wish all the best to the Comet Association and hope you will return again soon.

John Orchard Comet 619 (Staunton Harold S.C.)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JULY - SEPTEMBER 1997

<u>Date</u>	<u>Club</u> <u>Telephone</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Sat 19 July	Combs	NORTH ***	Sue Pollard	01457 862694
SUN 20 July	Aylesbury	SOUTH	Dave Timpson	01494 563127
27 July/3 Aug	Mudford week		Glynn Jung	01202 488508
Sat 2 Aug	Mudford	SOUTH	Peter Reed	01202 477281
Sat 9 Aug	Cotswold	WEST	Roger Edwards	01454 313306
SUN 17 Aug	Seafarers	SOUTH	John Glover	01329 665408

Fri-Sun NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

29-31 August

HAMPTON PIER YACHT CLUB Geoff Gambrill 01227 361156

Sat 13 Sept	Littleton	EAST	Martin Vinson	01483 38149
SUN 14 Sept	Arden	NORTH	Clive Marlow	01684 562808
Sat 27 Sept	Pingewood Training day		Mark Gale	01189 415829
SUN 28 Sept	Pingewood	WEST	Mark Gale	01189 415829

*** Note: Sue Pollard is now the contact for the Combs open meeting.

SUTTON BINGHAM OPEN

Sunday, 4th May saw 11 Comets turn out at Sutton Bingham SC for their open meeting. The others had clearly seen the weather forecast !

Alex Reeve made a late arrival ("tragic problems" he said) whilst the briefing was in progress and requested a delay to the start of the first race. The Race Organiser and other competitors duly agreed - a decision that would not have changed the results anyway.

The first race was sailed in a gusty force 5 with Alex Reeve taking a lead at the first mark, closely followed by Phillip Hossell and John Challener. John soon capsized on the very hairy run, closely followed by Phillip doing exactly the same. John recovered the quickest but in the meantime Alex had established a substantial lead. The rest of the fleet was struggling to come to terms with the run with many entertaining capsizes for the spectators. Alex was never to be caught and so took the line honours, with John some way behind in second place and Phillip in third. The only other finishers were Robin Ballam and Derek Coleman in fourth and fifth places respectively,

Conditions were just as bad for the second race. Only seven boats went out, with six making the start as Phillip suffered rudder gear failure on the start line. Again, Alex took the lead as conditions were freshening in a race that he again managed to dominate. John made a brave effort to catch Alex, but in so doing managed the capsize of the day when he nose-dived and was catapulted forwards out of the boat - great entertainment ! Alex won again, with John second. Meanwhile, Robin and Derek were spending considerably more time out of their boats than in them. Eventually, Robin was so exhausted that he could not bring his boat up one final time and so retired. Derek persisted to the very end and was given a loud cheer when he was the third and last finisher.

With no let up in the conditions, and the competitors satisfied not to have to sail again, the Race Organiser abandoned the third race.

Overall Results

1 st	573	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake SC	1.5 points
2nd	159	John Challener	Mudford SC	4 "
3rd	707	Derek Coleman	Coney SC	8 "
4th	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley Mariners	11 "
5th	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham SC	14 "
6th=	183	M G Gingell	Chippenham SC	17 "
6th=	644	Nigel Ford	Chase SC	17 "

CHESTER OPEN

There was an excellent turn-out of 13 Comets for the first of the Northern Area Aphelion Trophy events for 1997 held on the river Dee at Chester on Saturday, 10th May. With visitors from Evesham, Staunton Harold and Redesmere Sailing Clubs coupled with a gusting fresh SE wind, competitors and spectators were locked-in to an entertaining first race.

Phillip Hossell showed the way with a masterful demonstration of river sailing against the current on the testing course winning the race from Brian Herring and Peter Hayes. Capsizes were numerous resulting in only eight boats completing the course as thunder, lightning and hailstones rained down on the back markers.

The wind had reduced considerably for the start of the second race giving the lighter weight helms the chance to show their skills. The race was comfortably won by Henry Jaggars from Stuart Hadfield of the Chester Club and Hossell.

With all to sail for in the final race in the force 2 wind veering round to the south west, Jaggars led from start to finish from Ros Stevenson and the rest of the fleet. Stevenson capsizing on the final lap allowed Hadfield through to finish ahead of John Edwards and Hossell.

Final Results:

1	500	Henry Jaggars	Staunton Harold
2	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham
3	529	Stuart Hadfield	Chester
4	633	John Edwards	Chester
5	670	Peter Hayes	Redesmerc
6	72	Brian Herring	Winsford Flash

John Edwards Comet 633 (Chester S.& C.C.)



Henry leading the field,

and receiving the trophy

● GLOSSOP OPEN

On Saturday 17th May 1997 Glossop and District Sailing Club were hosts to their annual Comet open.

The day started with the surrounding hills shrouded in mist which lowered to settle on the water and with memories of the weather served up for previous Comet events, everyone was wondering what this day had in store!

We were pleased to welcome helms from as far afield as Loughborough, Evesham and Derby, with others coming from more local Clubs in Cheshire.

Thirteen craft took to the water, and in moderate winds which soon dispersed the mist, engaged in close and interesting competition.

By the third and final race, the sun was not the only thing raising the temperatures. There was still everything to play for amongst the lead boats.

The final results were as follows: -

1	331	Steve Heyes	Redesmere.
2	670	Peter Hayes	Redesmere.
3	500	Henry Jaggers	Staunton Harold
4	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham.
5	633	John Edwards	Chester
6	411	Will Ablett	Redesmere

Thanks go to everyone at Glossop and District S.C. who worked hard to make the event a success and we look forward to next year when we hope to welcome even more Comets to Glossop, for an exciting day of sailing in the hills.

Stuart Gilder Comet 585 (Glossop S.C.)

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

(CONTINUED)

Glossop

1	331	S Heyes
2	670	P Hayes
3	500	H Jaggers
4	650	P Hossell
5	633	J Edwards
6	411	W Ablett

Sutton Bingham

1	573	A Reeve
2	159	J Challener
3	707	D Coleman
4	518	R Ballam
5	650	P Hossell
6	183	M Gingell
6	644	N Ford

Crawley Mariners

1	573	A Reeve
2	188	S Thompson
3	150	R Hamilton
4	707	D Coleman
5	700	J Windibank
6	391	R Wallace

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.

● INLAND CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

1	657	<u>Mark Wilkins</u>	Chipstead	Inland Champion
2	642	<u>Jake Sutton</u>	Frensham Pond	Runner-up
3	513	David Forsdike	Welwyn	
4	159	John Challener	Mudeford	
5	700	John Windibank	Chipstead	
6	188	Simon Thompson	Crawley Mariners	
7	150	Robert Hamilton	Taplow Lake	Junior
8	573	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake	
9	500	Henry Jagers	Staunton Harold	Veteran
10	95	Heather Back	Mudeford	1 st Lady
11	532	John Coppenhall	Hunts	
12	117	Michael Thompson	CrawleyMariners	
13	637	Andrew Hirford	Taplow Lake	
14	63	Chris Robinson	Tamworth	
15	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley Mariners	Middle fleet
16	633	John Edwards	Chester	Middle fleet
17	707	Derek Coleman	Coney	
18	625	Tony Best	Taptow Lake	
19	715	Tony Evans	Llandegfed	
20	211	Chris Weston	Naseby	
21	658	Ros Stevenson	Winsford Flash	
22	99	Paul Luttmann	Crawley Mariners	
23	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham	
24	496	Jim Robb	Welwyn	
25	643	Keith Appleby	Carsington	
26	601	Trish Moore	Staunton Harold	
27	641	Paul Hinde	Middle Nene	
28	50	Diana Thompson	Crawley Mariners	
29	688	Hilary Wetherdon	Staunton Harold	
30	575	Fiona Cauter	Chipstead	

A report on the Inland Championships is on page 18.

YACHTS & YACHTING DINGHY FORUM

(For the origin of this article, see Editor's note below)

Alex Reeve believes in the strength of no-fuss, non-sponsored grassroots British dinghy racing. We asked last year's Comet class national champion to expand on his theory ...

Small Is beautiful

If you attach a smileometer to the face of a sailor winning their first Miracle open meeting, and one to the winner of a Laser 5000 international event, whose face would crack the widest grin? Of course, it's not a fair comparison - the poor Laser 5000 sailor has to go and ring the sponsor, struggle back to the hotel and then do an interview for Sky. The Miracle sailor, on the other hand, can go home, enjoy a hot dinner with the trophy sitting atop the TV, then dream the win all over again! So the Miracle, like all small classes, is bound to be more fun.

I don't mean classes which are small numerically - there are probably still more Comets (a relatively small class) than all the asymmetrics put together - I mean one which is small in terms of hype. Small classes have no sponsor and little marketing budget. They are controlled by their class associations and rely on amateurs and part-timers. Their sail numbers begin at zero, instead of starting from 10,000 to make it look as if there are more of them. They may be able to put the odd advert in Yachts and Yachting, but the photos will always be a bit blurred.

But does that matter when most of us will never reach the front in an international event anyway? Most of us would struggle to reach the front even if the rest of the fleet took a wrong course. The real pleasure of racing comes from friendly competition with your peers, whether that means an Olympic contender or a bloke with four small children and a dog in the boat. Small classes have closer competition, more enthusiasm and more friendliness.

Club class

Smaller classes are mainly sailed at smaller clubs. This is partly because the boats are often slower - at my club any asymmetric dinghy would be sailing across the neighbouring farmer's field before they got the kite down - and partly because they work together well. Smaller clubs are more in touch with their members, and more friendly because everyone knows each other. They are usually well managed by a keen committee whose members sometimes actually go sailing. Small clubs have big enthusiasm, and often excellent competition.

At club level, it would be hard to find closer or better competition than the Solo fleet at Littleton (small class, small club) in which they often have over 20 boats in the races including past national champions and top ten sailors. How many Laser national champions still turn out in club races?

And if you want even more competition, mix club sailing with open meetings. The Comets have an open circuit based at small clubs around the country which often attracts 30 or even 40 sailors to the start line, as well as holding two championships each year. This is a testament to the sheer enthusiasm of the sailors, who value tight racing and an amiable attitude far more highly than tactical skill.

And small clubs have more atmosphere. OK, OK, it's partly because the toilets don't work... but better than signs everywhere telling you to guard your belongings with your life. I like a club where a thief would be spotted instantly because a club member would go up and talk to them, believing them to be a newcomer to the sport.

Training

My club offers an RYA Levels I and II course, with a year's membership including full use of the club's boats, for £95. How? Because the RYA-qualified instructors do it for nothing. They do it because they want to see more sailors on the water, more members in the clubhouse, and because they simply love doing it. This is where sailing really starts, in slow boats on lakes which are so small that if a learner goes wrong they end up safely on the lee shore... not drifting off to Ostend!

Training should also encourage the importance of friendliness and community in sailing, not merely in learners but also in experienced sailors. If racing is only fun when you win, most sailors would never have any fun. So sailors should be nice - learners should be encouraged to help each other pull boats off the water; racers should be told that rhythmic pulling on ropes is for bell-ringers, not sailors.

'Yoof' sailing

Training children to sail in proper, safe circumstances is an inherently good thing, but following the tragedy at Lyme Bay, the government has changed the law. Full details are available from the RYA, but the gist of it is that a club has to be specially certified if it wants to train children from outside the club, i.e. novices, even if it is already recognised as competent by the RYA. This certification is very expensive for small clubs, and can preclude them from training the very people who will form the lifeblood of sailing in the future. Everyone recognises the overriding importance of safety, but a law designed in response to a canoeing

accident at sea should not be applied to dinghies sailing on a 30-acre gravel pit. RYA certification should be sufficient, and if it is not, it should be made to be.

One alternative is to start a Young Sailors Club. Since it will have members who are encouraged to come every week, without necessarily being trained, it does not require certification. This is a fairly odd state of affairs, but does have significant benefits. I was extremely impressed with the Otters Club at Burnham-on-Crouch, which sails Cadets in very large numbers and at a very high standard. What finer sight could there be than watching 80 children rigging their boats to go racing?

I started sailing as a young teenager, and enjoyed it immediately. This was not because I was any good, but because there were girls there. In fact, the more girls there were, and the hotter the summer, the worse at sailing I became. Trainers should not forget that sailing should also be a social activity - the best way to avoid losing youngsters to parties and boy/girlfriends is to have the parties and boy/girlfriends at the sailing club.

In conclusion

Sailing should not go the way of football - more and more power and wealth for a few large organisations. Those who shout loudest and have the glossiest brochures are not always the best, as the very survival of the small clubs and classes testifies. So next time you are changing club or class, don't necessarily believe the hype.

(Alex Reeve has been sailing for nearly 20 years, having started sailing in a Mirror at the age of 13 at ICI (Slough) Sailing Club near Maidenhead. Since then he has tried Lasers, Larks and Enterprises, but now sails mainly Solos and Comets. He won the Comet Inland Championship in 1995 and National Championship in 1996. He is also an RYA-qualified Race Trainer.)

Editor's note: This is the article Alex wrote for Yachts & Yachting recently. It is reprinted here by kind permission of the Editor.

PERIHELION

I know this issue is late arriving on your doorstep, I had nearly finished preparing it when my computer froze! It was silly to try to go back to the old, "type it-reduce it-stick it on the page" method, so a week was lost. Sorry about that, but at least the machine's still under warranty and the Chairman's report arrived in time!

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in September 1997. Contributions to me by the end of August please.

A FRIENDLY LITTLE PACKAGE OF FAST FUN!

"Fast, friendly, fun" the advert in "Yachts and Yachting" quoted. **Fast friendly and fun** is exactly how I have found the Comet Class at Littleton and that's without even having sailed mine!

Since November I have been the proud owner of a Comet and although I haven't sailed yet, due to illness and my GCSE mocks (and the fact that we don't have a tow-bar or roof rack on our car yet) I have already made plenty of new **friends** at the sailing club especially because there is no shortage of **friendly, happy, helpful...** (stop me, the list is endless) Comet sailors to talk to. Everyone, even the better sailor, is willing to give advice and share their secrets of success with raw beginners and the more experienced alike, and I've needed it, especially concerning the avoidance of any more terrifying death-rolls, two of which I experienced at the testing day at Kingsmead S.C. last Autumn, when the only possible way to return to the jetty was by running (I wasn't even put off the **wonderful little dinghy** by that, although I have to admit I had already chosen the Comet in preference to the Laser Radial).

At Littleton we even have **friendly** evening gatherings, which began under the glow of comet Hale-Bopp, when the more experienced sailors give advice (we've even had a visit from Alex Reeve) and this will no doubt help me and all the other Comet sailors when we get our boats on the water and allow us to start terrorising the Solos with all our newly learned racing techniques. These evening meetings mean that the keen Comet sailor can now sail up to four times each week, so all learning curves will be steep.

One thing I have noticed: where are all the young people? I'm 16, and the only other teenagers I've seen sailing a Comet are those borrowing it from their parents. In my opinion the Comet is a suitable progression from the Topper or from an RYA level 2 course for any youngster or adult, especially if you have long legs and don't fancy folding yourself up in the Laser's cramped cockpit in light winds. My school friends also think it's the perfect opportunity for them to try sailing!

All Comet sailors I have spoken to seem to think the Comet is the **"bee's knees"** and I have to agree with them. **With such a fun boat to sail and friendly people to sail with who could ask for anything more from a boat?**

Well done the Comet class, you deserve congratulations for making beginners feel so welcome and well informed. Well done Andrew Simmons for making everyone proud to say, "I sail a Comet."

Anna Ludgate (Comet 480, Littleton S.C.)

● HELP FOR LOTTERY NUMBER 254

Ted Painting's description of his problems of launching and recovery on the Thames rang a vague bell at the back of a poor memory. A search of the archives revealed an article by Roger Johnstone (curiously of a close relative, number 249) entitled 'More Outhaul - Less Hassle', (Perhelion 18, page6).

We will send Ted a copy of the article but it all hinged on a long clew outhaul rope (roughly another 8 ft) already attached to a bunched and tied sail (not furled) which seemed to help Roger in similar difficulties on a slipway.

I also seem to remember someone attaching the mainsheet to the boom ring with a snap shackle and being easily able to remove the sheet and thereby let the boom swing harmlessly head to wind. (Keith Bullock of Kingsmead did this, I saw it when I talked to him about the mast crane. Ed)

I imagine that few people in their late seventies are going to find recovering a capsized Comet easy (!) but I know that Barrie Hylton recommends coming onto the centreboard, from the bow, next to the hull where the board is only a few inches above water level. A little weight applied there seems to bring the boat upright quite easily.

Finally, I must agree about the problems caused by a sleeved sail and, for me, the one thing that would convert the Comet from a great boat to an unbeatable one is a halyard to enable the sail to be raised and lowered from the cockpit. Discussing this with Andy Simmons years ago brought the answer in relation to a considerable additional cost but I would be prepared to pay a premium for this option.

In the meantime, the Mino sail is a sensible option which is why I remain keen to see it included in the Association's activities.

Keith Lamdin (Comets 55 & 241, Aylesbury S.C.)

● RACING RULES UPDATE

I said in my previous article that I was using the Autumn draft and, when the new rules were made available very shortly before they came into force, there were

some changes! Mostly they were minor changes of better wording, tense and compatibility between rules but there were two significant alterations.

1. Draft rule 16.2 was deleted entirely. This means there is now no restriction on a starboard boat altering course relative to a port boat, subject only to the 'principle' rules 15 and 16.

This change, which was brought in to satisfy the match racing lobby even though they have a separate Appendix, gives a starboard R-O-W boat an increased opportunity to 'hunt' a port G-W boat as long as room to keep clear is given. Port tackers, you have been warned - don't take your eyes off a near-by starboard boat! With reference to the previous 35.b.1, these are still prohibited by rule 16 but in a less specific way than the deleted 16.2.

2. Draft rule 17 included the words "Except on a beat to windward", and they have now been deleted from 17.1 while retained in 17.2. In practice, this may make little difference to the effect of 17.1 as no boat can sail above her proper course on a beat for very long without slowing and losing way. However, the windward boat should remember that a leeward boat may sail as close to the wind as she believes is proper and the windward boat must keep clear, subject to rules 15 and 16.

On further consideration of this rule, and the change, I would now say that the previous 42.a.i and 42.a.ii are allowed, subject to rule 17.1.

Also, in my previous article, I said the main difficulty was that of interpretation and lack of case law and this is proving to be the case. I listened to an interesting presentation by Trevor Lewis, at Sailboat, and his most common answers to questions were "You may be right" and "Your guess is as good as mine"! We need appeals to clarify the rules in case law. However, the following interpretations have emerged although I would emphasise that these are not yet enshrined for reference.

1. Keeping Clear includes an ability for a R-O-W boat to alter course without contact. However, the test is seen as the ability to either bear away or luff, but not necessarily both, which may mean that your option is not the one you would prefer to choose. I am not convinced that this is what the RRWP intended but it complies with the definition wording.

2. Damage in rule 14 is not defined but one view is that "which a prudent owner would repair" and this may be clarified by the effect on the boat and the cost to repair.

3. Room to keep clear in rules 15 and 16 is always likely to be a major source of debate because it depends entirely on two different perspectives.

However, a general view indicates that if the G-W boat is able to keep clear then the R-O-W boat has complied with its obligations. Given reasonably similar boat performance and equal competence in boat handling, the G-W boat should be able to match the manoeuvres of the R-O-W boat and the protection afforded by rules 15 and 16 must be considered as being of limited duration.

4. The requirement to gybe at a mark under rule 18.4 is determined by the inside boat's proper course and this will depend on both the type of boat and the helm's view of the proper course. This may be different from any outside boat which may prefer to gybe but cannot insist subject to the right to ask the inside boat to defend her actions through protest.

Finally, for the moment (!), I said I believed it to be a correct assumption that a gybing boat will be required to keep clear during that act. Well, maybe and maybe not!!!

If, in gybing, a boat acquires right of way or, being already right of way, changes course then rules 15 and 16 require the boat to give room.

Fine, but the opposite of this produces a view that if the boat, in gybing, is only retaining, and not acquiring, right of way and does not alter course during the act, then rules 15 and 16 do not apply and the gybing boat need not keep clear during that act!

I do not like this interpretation but I am advised by the RRWP that it is correct and the onus is on the boat which was already in a give way position to keep clear at sufficient distance in anticipation of a possible gybe by the right of way boat.

The case is shown in figure 1 and, while the rules have never required anticipation of this sort before and I have difficulty in believing this falls within the original intent of the new rules, it does comply with the wording of the rules.

Also, a warning although it is not strictly an issue of the rules but sharp practice in their application. A boat establishing a leeward overlap from clear astern within two hull lengths of the windward boat, need only gybe and gybe back whilst remaining overlapped, to obtain rights under rule 17.1. In the absence of a definition of gybing, this is entirely possible so beware!

As before, please let me have comments, queries and protests which may help us all understand these deceptively simple new rules.

Keith Lamdin (Comets 55 & 241, Aylesbury S.C.)

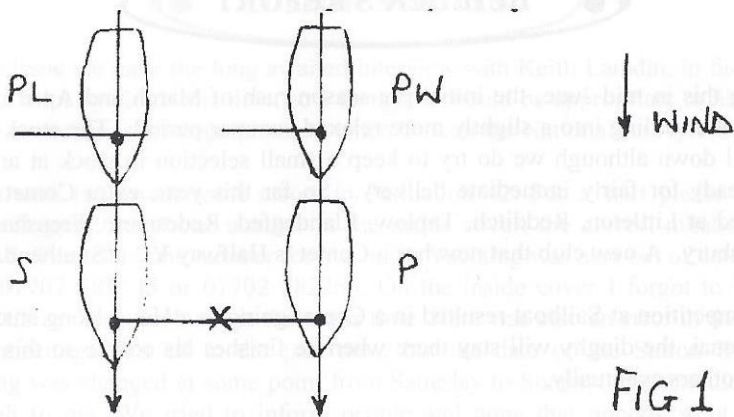
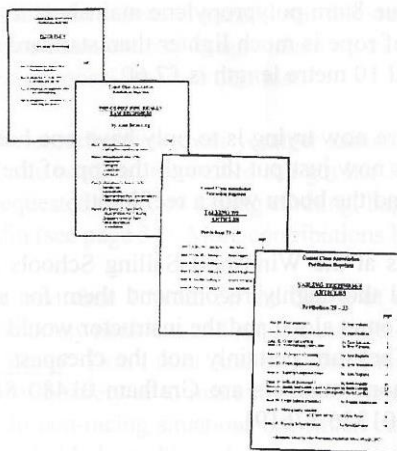


FIG 1

● RE-ISSUE OF PERIHELION ARTICLES

The four booklets of re-issued articles are now available to novices and new members: Topics: "Sailing technique", "Talking to . . .", "Really raw beginners" and "Fluid flow".



Single booklets posted £1 delivered by hand 50p
 All four booklets posted £3 delivered by hand £1-50

Alan Browning, Editor

BUILDER'S REPORT

Writing this in mid June, the initial pre-season rush of March and April is over and we are settling into a slightly more relaxed summer period. The stock levels are well down although we do try to keep a small selection in stock at any one time, ready for fairly immediate delivery. So far this year, extra Comets have appeared at Littleton, Redditch, Taplow, Llandegfed, Redesmere, Frensham and Tewkesbury. A new club that now has a Comet is Halfway YC at Southend.

The competition at Sailboat resulted in a Comet going to a Hong Kong student at Plas Menai, the dinghy will stay there when he finishes his course so this might lead to others eventually.

On the second-hand Comet scene, existing fleets are growing and the Winsford Flash fleet is about to double in size with an ex-demonstrator about to go there!

Technically speaking now, we've changed the cleats on the deck to new black anodised ones from Holt Allen, rather than the silver painted ones which used to corrode a bit. The anodising seems to keep them sharper and grippier. The price is £4.68 inc vat each.

We've also found a blue 8mm polypropylene mainsheet to add to our usual black or yellow. This type of rope is much lighter than standard and doesn't soak up so much water. The usual 10 metre length is £7.60.

One little change we are now trying is to only have one hook at the outhaul. The 'clew tie down' rope is now just put through the top of the block where the hook goes and this ties around the boom with a reef knot.

There are now Comets at the Windsport Sailing Schools at Falmouth, Grafham and Rutland. I would thoroughly recommend them for any one-to-one tuition. You could take your Comet along and the instructor would use their Comet for on the water coaching. They are certainly not the cheapest sailing school but are probably the best. Phone numbers are Grafham 01480 812288, Rutland 01780 722100 and Falmouth 01326 376191.

Don't forget, if anyone wants Comet brochures for their club, please give me a ring.

Andrew Simmons, Comet Dinghies

EDITOR'S NOTES

In this issue we have the long awaited interview with Keith Lamdin, in fact there is quite a lot by Keith this time, so I thought it would be appropriate to have him on the cover too, a photograph taken when he won the Nationals at Aylesbury.

There were (as usual) some errors in Perihelion 42. For a start please correct Henry Jagers' telephone number in the inside cover, the correct number is on page 15. The telephone number for Yachts & Yachting was also out of date and is now: 01702 582245 or 01702 582266. On the inside cover I forgot to include Fiona Cauter's name, but it is there this time. Here was also an error in the list of open meetings, it's all in the past now, but the date of the Sutton Bingham meeting was changed at some point from Saturday to Sunday, and that didn't get through to me. We tried to inform people and hope that nobody went on the wrong day.

After going into print on the "Meteor trophies", I discovered to my embarrassment that Richard Smallwood had mentioned just such an idea to me when we chatted last year (Perihelion 37, page 20). Brian Welham has also mentioned to me that something similar has been tried in his club too, so obviously the idea has been around for a bit. I look forward to discussion on it at AGM time.

Thinking of the AGM, and the recent discussion on the status of the Mino, Keith Lamdin and Tony Thomas seem entirely in agreement on this issue, and I hope they will see fit to formulate a proposal for us to consider.

My request last time for contributions from younger sailors was fulfilled by Anna Ludgate (see page 27), she wrote to me before she got her Perihelion 42 too, Must be psychic! My other requested topic, on sailing clothing, happened to turn up when I chatted to Keith Lamdin (see page 34). More contributions like these please.

What can I suggest for next time ? Well, on the theme of catering for non-racing Comet owners, I shall stick my neck out and request contributions on "**Out of class modifications to the Comet**". Don't faint Andrew, what I have in mind particularly are modifications to do with safety or to make life easier, and of two types, a) mods that are mainly for use in non-racing situations but which can be removed for class competitions and b) "no holds barred" mods used by sailors who never intend to race. I propose to make a series out of this, having in mind collecting them together into a booklet later on, and am planning to start things off with an interview with a sailor in my own club who will suggest some modifications of type a).

Alan Browning, Editor.

● SAFETY AND CLOTHING

Regulated sailing ?

Safety in dinghy sailing is completely unregulated, you can go sailing without any safety regulations whatsoever. Now sometimes this brings the sport into disrepute because you get silly people who go out on the sea, don't know what they're doing, get themselves into trouble and have to be rescued. I am concerned that in the long run some form of certification may come in terms of using a dinghy in the same way as there is for cars, gliders etc. I would hate to see that and it's up to the sport to regulate itself so that people don't do silly things on water. Clearly, doing a silly thing in a glider is a bit terminal, because if you come down and crash then you are going to die. But you can die in a sailing boat too if you do something silly, and people do, or at least they put the rescue services to considerable time, effort and potential risk in saving them. So people have to be careful. I wouldn't want to see sailing become a regulated sport, having to have a licence to sail and all the rest of it. It's up to us.

Safety and rescue boats

We had quite a discussion at the Aylesbury AGM last year about safety on the water and as much as anything it was people being concerned about the safe use of rescue boats. We have courses on the use of the rescue boats but you can't enforce people to go on them. I made the point that we must be clear on what the rescue boat is there for. People were getting confused about the use of a rescue boat to right and retrieve a capsized dinghy, that is not what the rescue boat is there for - the rescue boat is for people. You can always go back for the dinghy, it's not going to go anywhere and on inland water it will still be there in an hour's time. If there's a difficult situation, for example a number of capsizes and the weather is really bad, we should first take the people off the boats, get them ashore, get them warm, get them in the clubhouse and then go back for the boats later.

Buoyancy aids

We did have a discussion at the 1991 AGM when Errol Edwards wanted to bring in a rule about always wearing a buoyancy aid. I was against that for a number of reasons. Not that I was against the principles that Errol had in mind, which were all safety principles, but to have it as a rule of the Association I thought led to a number of potential issues. If you are trying to ensure that no-one will die in a Comet, then you've got to wear a life-jacket, not a buoyancy aid, because a buoyancy aid will not save you from drowning if you've been knocked unconscious by the boom. Because of this, a number of sailors are now wearing helmets, not just in Comets but generally. By all means put notices in the handbook and Perihelion that say buoyancy aids are "recommended" but no more. At Aylesbury in the summer we sometimes have absolutely flat calm conditions, in half of the lake you can stand

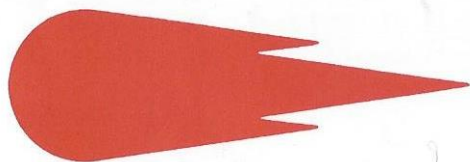
with the water only up to your waist, and I do not want someone saying “you’re not going on the water without a buoyancy aid” . What I want is people to understand when they should wear a buoyancy aid and to understand the conditions that they are in. Now I doubt that I would go sailing out on the sea at Clacton without wearing a buoyancy aid, even in the flattest conditions. I might, but at somewhere like Mudeford, which is shallow and totally land-locked, I could potter around there without a buoyancy aid in light wind conditions, quite safely. We do expect juniors to wear buoyancy aids. I think this is as much as anything about liability, we don’t want to be liable for a problem with a junior. If in doubt I will put on a buoyancy aid, but if I am convinced of my own ability in the conditions, then I’ll sail without one.

Wet-suits

At Aylesbury we’ve got another rule that somebody stupidly brought in on wearing wet-suits, but they’ve done it by the time of year! It’s got nothing to do with the time of year! It’s to do with the conditions you’re sailing in. The trouble with having it by time of year is that people think it implies that after April 1st it is perfectly OK to sail without a wet-suit and that might not be the case. The water can still be very cold in May, but, on the other hand, a year ago I was sailing in November and December in shirtsleeves, because it was warm enough. So I really want people to understand the weather conditions, understand the boat and their limitations within the boat and dress accordingly. Some people wear a wet-suit whatever the conditions, but wearing a wet-suit in hot weather can be dangerous from overheating. It can also be dangerous in cold conditions in very light winds because you’re not moving enough to generate warmth. Then what you need is a warm-suit. I’ve got a one-piece warm-suit, which is made of pile, and I can sit still in cold weather and still keep warm. You can’t do that in a wet-suit.

Keith Lamdin Comets 55 and 241 (Aylesbury S.C.)

(Editor’s note: This text derives from my “Talking to . . .” interview with Keith, but I have separated it out because I requested articles on this topic in the previous issue of Perihelion. When I began sailing, I did use simple rules (and still do) for the choice of clothing, based purely on the temperature of the water, to avoid hypothermia in a lonely capsized (see my “Raw beginner” articles, part 2). On the one occasion when I capsized “in anger” I was fine, but on many occasions I have been rather too hot, suggesting that perhaps my rules should include the air temperature and windspeed too. Beginners without experience need rules to work to and I invite suggestions for such rules to aid the choice of sailing clothing.)



Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association