



NEWSLETTER NUMBER 44
AUTUMN 1997

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Front cover:

Colin Boys having fun in his Comet "Hale Bopp" (see pages 6-12)

(Photo: Anne Browning)



New
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hampton Pier Y.C., 30th August 1997. Annual General Meeting of the Comet Class Association: the new Chairman is duly elected. Thank you for putting your trust in me as your new Chairman.

I am Henry Jagers and sail "Cat's Whiskers", Comet 500. I have been sailing Comets for over ten years now and have seen the class develop into a genuine force in British sailing. My sailing career started in earnest thirty years ago and although I have sailed and raced other boats in the past, and with some measure of success, I have never regretted buying a Comet. I do not need to tell you what a really super boat it is and I am proud to have been offered the Association helm. I will serve the class to the best of my ability although our retiring chairman has set a very high standard and will be a hard act to follow!

This year's National Championship at Hampton Pier was, I think, a resounding success. We enjoyed almost ideal weather conditions and escaped the storms which ravaged other parts of the country. If the wind was much of the time a bit too strong for my liking, it was not that extreme (except for the first day!) and produced some very fine sailing. I was constantly amazed by the general competence of Comet sailors at all levels in the race. Whether winners or, like me on this occasion, just taking part, all 34 competitors acquitted themselves extremely well and were a credit to the Class. A full report of the event will appear elsewhere but I must repeat my thanks to Hampton Pier Yacht Club for a responsible and difficult job very well done.

Our open meetings, and especially the Championship meetings, are much more than just racing events important though that aspect is. Throughout the season we renew old friendships, make new friends and contacts, and help spread the word on Comets. Long may this continue. I expect to be returning to this theme many times during my term of office!

This year's AGM was very well attended and, as we usually try to arrange, developed into an enjoyable social event. I was especially pleased to be able to second the vote of thanks to John Windibank which had been proposed by Keith Lamdin, our first chairman. I could not vouch for the constitutional rectitude of the procedure as Keith was unable to be present in person, but I had no doubt of the ethical position. The motion was passed unanimously.

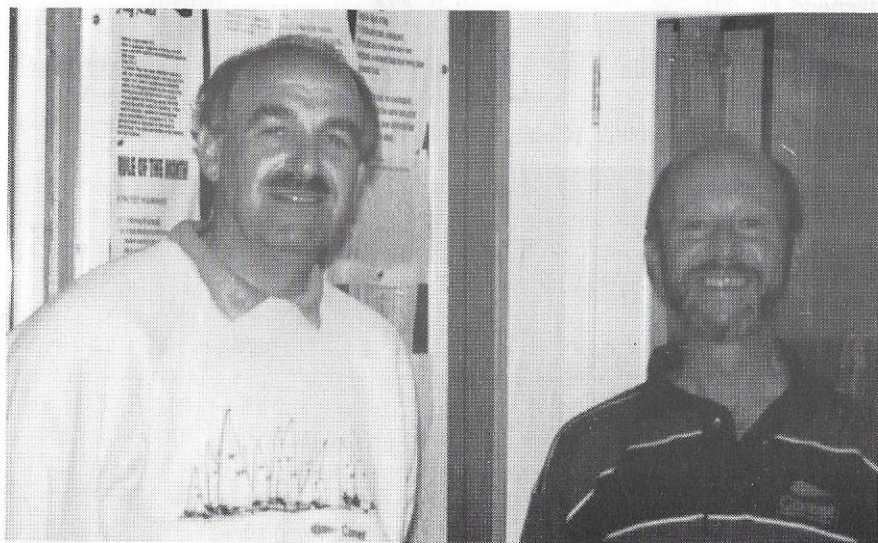
The AGM discussed a number of matters of relevance to Comets and sailing in general and these will be reported to you in due course. In particular, it was noted that the new racing rules embody some changes to the scoring system which the meeting thought undesirable in the name of fair competition (the tie breaking procedure) or for encouraging more people to compete in events (points for retirements and did not competes). We will report on our decisions at a later date.

I was delighted that all the other officers and committee members were re-elected. Much as I want to encourage new blood to join us, we worked well together under our previous chairman and I value their experience and enthusiasm very highly indeed.

Well, this is the end of my first report as Chairman, written in some haste to meet the deadline. The programme for next year is already taking shape ...

Good sailing.

Henry Jagers, Chairman. September 1997



Retiring Chairman, John Windibank with new Chairman, Henry Jagers

(Photo: Anne Browning)

LETTER FROM THE RETIRING CHAIRMAN

Dear friends

Mavis and I would like to thank you all for the lovely presents we received at the end of the AGM in August. My years as a committee member and chairman have been very happy and memorable, and were enhanced by the wonderful friendliness of the Class.

Our gifts adorn a prominent position in our sitting room where they will give constant pleasure.

I will of course still be competing and enjoying the Comet Class events and Mavis insists I am easier to live with after sailing.

My good wishes to Henry who will of course do the job his way and as always very well. I am sure he will enjoy the challenges as much as I did and will appreciate all our help and support which I am sure will continue to be freely given.

Thank you all once again

John and Mavis Windibank (Comets 555 & 700)



Mavis



John

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

Combs

- 1 670 P Hayes
- 2 650 P Hossell
- 3 633 J Edwards
- 4 331 S Heyes
- 5 508 M Smith
- 6 235 S Pollard

Taplow Lake

- 1 150 R Hamilton
- 2 657 M Wilkins
- 3 573 A Reeve
- 4 188 S Thompson
- 5 711 B Welham
- 6 700 J Windibank

Merthyr Tydfil

- 1 419 P Govier
- 2 460 M Govier
- 3 25 R Presley
- 4 650 P Hossell
- 5 N/A
- 6 N/A

Chipstead

- 1 353 G Wilkins
- 2 94 A Bowes
- 3 573 A Reeve
- 4 657 M Wilkins
- 5 700 J Windibank
- 6 707 D Coleman

Frensham Pond

- 1 642 J Sutton
- 2 573 A Reeve
- 3 150 R Hamilton
- 4 63 C Robinson
- 5 657 M Wilkins
- 6 518 R Ballam

Cotswold

- 1 657 M Wilkins
- 2 633 W Edwards
- 3 650 P Hossell
- 4 653 B Herring
- 5 419 P Govier
- 6 707 D Coleman

Seafarers

- 1 657 M Wilkins
- 2 700 J Windibank
- 3 40 S Cook
- 4 353 G Wilkins
- 5 573 A Reeve
- 6 518 R Ballam

Aylesbury

- 1 573 A Reeve
- 2 657 M Wilkins
- 3 711 B Welham
- 4 518 R Ballam
- 5 650 P Hossell
- 6 63 C Robinson

Mudford

- 1 159 J Challener
- 2 95 H Back
- 3 707 D Coleman
- 4 183 M Gingell
- 5 109 L Cox
- 6 247 B O'Herlihy

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.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR COMET - PART 1

Looking at the Comets at the National Championships you will see almost identical boats. We are allowed different pulley arrangements but beyond this the one-design rules allow very few modifications for boats that race. On the other hand, for the owner who never intends to race, he may customize his boat as he likes, to suit his ability or to help him in situations he frequently finds himself in. Between these extremes is the owner who does race but also uses his boat for fun too and customizing the boat can be a bit of a problem, and in this article I talk to one such owner, Colin Boys, who sails Comet 27 in my own club.

In later articles on this theme I intend to reprint items from earlier Perihelions, for many owners will not have the complete set.

To make things easier for you to decide whether a particular modification is for you, I give each a code letter:

A: Definitely within class rules

B: Believed to be within class rules, but may require a General Meeting resolution

R: Out of class, but can be removed for racing

Y: Believed to be out of class

Z: Definitely out of class.

I plan to include not only the Comet boat in these articles, but also anything, or any ideas, relating to sailing it. For example, category A will include anything you leave behind on the shore, gadgets for storing spars, launching aids etc. Also, I will include things in the "idea" stage that have not yet been made into hardware.

Alan: OK Colin, one day, when we were on the jetty, you mentioned some things you've done to Comet 27 since you bought it a couple of years ago, after quite a number of years sailing a Graduate and a Mirror.



Colin Boys

Colin: Yes, the first thing you do when you buy any boat is to make it yours. It's often just changing the sheets or a ratchet block but the first thing I did was to give my boat the name "Hale Bopp". I knew about the heavenly comet of that name well before it made its famous pass because my wife is an amateur astronomer. We knew it was on its way two years before most people did, shortly after it was discovered.

Burgee tube in the upper mast plug (item 1, code A)

The first mod I did was to fit a small diameter aluminium tube in the upper mast plug. At the upper end is a flange, araldited on, and the lower end is plugged and sealed. Two small screws hold the flange in place and when the burgee is fitted I bend the shaft a little to hold it there. Mounting the burgee this way avoids anything on the outside of the mast which might wear the sail sleeve. **Alan:** I remember this idea was mentioned by Keith Lamdin (Perihelion 8) but without any construction details. **Colin:** You have to be careful with the sealant you use. I know that Barrie Hylton uses clear, non-acid silicone sealant. Other sealants contain lactic acid which is quite corrosive.

P.t.f.e insert in the mast socket (item 2, code A)

When new, Comet masts fit neatly into their sockets, but I've heard a lot of new boats squeak and I know quite a few people who have used grease there. When the socket wears, the fibreglass, once the gel coat's gone, is extremely abrasive. If you look at the anodising on the mast itself, on many boats that's well worn through. Because my boat has such an early number (27) it's fairly elderly and the socket is well worn. There was room to fit a piece of p.t.f.e about 10 thousandths of an inch thick in there as a dry lubricant (Ed note: p.t.f.e. is the stuff often used on "non-stick" cooking pans). It is not easy to stick anything to p.t.f.e., but the type I used had a brown coating on one side and I was able to use superglue. The mod makes a tremendous difference, particularly on light downwind runs, the boom can swing out very smoothly.

Ratchet block (item 3, code A)

My boat came without a ratchet block, now standard on new Comets. So I caught up with the rest by fitting one. I had a particular reason for doing it, in the winter I have dead fingers, Reynolds disease. So I have a job to keep a grip and that ratchet block does help.

Kicker ring and plate system (item 4, code A)

The next thing I did was an improved kicker arrangement. I came across it at a Crawley open meeting, meticulously copied the dimensions and went straight to work the following day. **Alan:** Yes, this was the brainchild of Keith Bullock, who sails Comet 300 at Kingsmead. It is described in Perihelion 29, page 20/21 and has been accepted in the Comet scene because of the words "construction, type and power of purchase optional" in the measurement rules. The photograph in figure 1 is of your version. **Colin:** I do

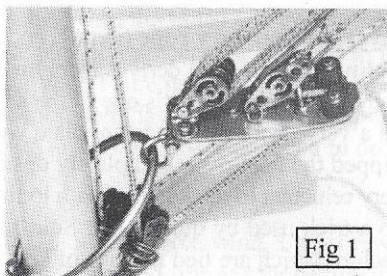


Fig 1

think that is excellent, though I think you can get a distinct advantage. On a very light downwind run you can keep the kicker on, flattening the sail right out, and the boom stays out there. With the conventional kicker, the connection to the deck inhibits this. Ten out of ten to Keith Bullock for that, it appealed to me.

Boom mainsheet connection eye (item 5, code A)

At the aft end of the boom, there is a U-shaped eye for attachment of the mainsheet. This is of pressed stainless steel and the section leaves two sharp edges pointing downwards and as they swing round on the stern tank they can scratch the gel coat quite badly. I didn't like that but couldn't see an easy answer. I thought of sticking contact plastic sheeting on the tank, but I have resolved it with a simple mod that I saw on another boat (shown in figure 2). That was to fill the section with a short piece of rope. I tried superglue to start with, but changes of temperature loosened it. I was successful with Evostik.

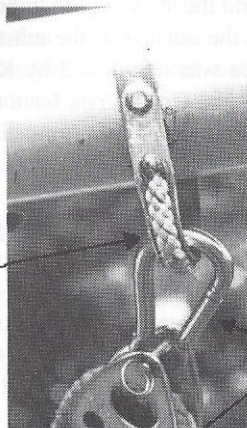


Fig 2

Alan: Yes, you saw it on Comet 673, now at Frensham but previously owned by an engineer, Harvey Martin. I had heard of this mod and others that Harvey had done, and indeed had asked him to contribute to Perihelion, and he may do so yet.

Boom to block snap shackle. (item 6, code B)

Colin: I attach the ratchet block to the boom eye by a snap shackle. This is very handy when launching against a lee-shore wind. You can fully rig the sail, unhook the snap shackle and let the boom go over the bow while you launch. I saw that on Steve Hill's old boat, number 530. **Alan:** Yes, I think the history of that one is that Steve bought that boat from Bill Robson who sailed at Kingsmead. The snap shackle idea was probably from Keith Bullock again, for I saw one on Keith's boat when I chatted to him in 1993.

Inversion recovery rope (item 7, code B)

Colin: My next mod derives from inverting my Comet last year at Bala, a very deep and cold lake. Again, it's one of the shortcomings of the Comet, I was in a race there on a very fast downwind run, plate well up, I took a gust so I went even faster and flipped the boat over, completely upside down and the plate dropped through. I was very reluctant to duck underneath to find it and I needed assistance in the end. I picked up a trick used by quite a few Solo sailors. It consists of a pair of floating ropes in each of which are tied a series of knots for a good grip. Each rope is attached to the forward toestrap attachment, passing over the gunwale either side of the dagger board. (Figure 3).

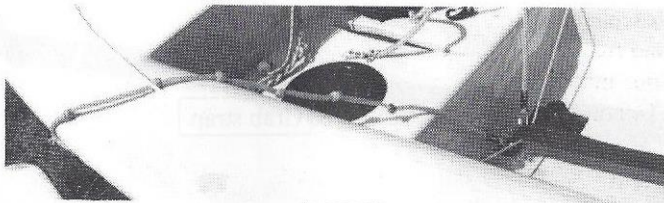


Fig 3

This is where I've made a slight mod to the hull. Down the side where the gunwale overhangs the edge. I've drilled a row of 1.5 mm holes, 2 ft apart, right down at the bottom edge. Then, with whipping cord I've tied the knotted ropes underneath the overhang. The ropes go all the way down to the transom. Now, with the boat totally inverted, I can get hold of one of the ropes, break it free, throw it over to the other side, swim round to it and I've now effectively got what would amount to, in a two-sail boat, a jib sheet. I can pull myself on to the top of the boat and pull the boat over. Since I made it I haven't had to use it in anger, but it was there all the time I was in Bala recently, just in case. It's a fairly simple mod and can be very comforting for someone who is, say, coastal sailing and who is a little bit nervous that, if in trouble, help might be some time coming.

Grab straps (item 8, code R)

Now for a serious mod. I love sailing, even in the winter when my hands can't feel anything. My boat has no grab rails and the rails, even the newer ones which are bigger, still require the pulling to be done with the fingers, and in my case that is just not on. What I have done is to put what look like two extra toe straps, one down each side of the cockpit, at the height of the forward seat (figure 4). They are attached with ordinary toe strap attachment clamps, but are fitted quite close to the junction between the forward and side buoyancy tanks, where the structure is very strong. It's the same for the rear attachment. The only thing I could find to put those on with were ordinary plaster board plugs that open out to 4 legs. I covered them with the non-corrosive silicon sealant, pushed them into the holes and pulled them up so they expanded behind. I didn't use self tapping screws because I wanted to be sure that there was plenty of strength there and I wasn't sure how much thickness of fibreglass there was. I was very pleased, it did work, there is a large area of strap for me to get hold of. It's a serious bit of engineering to the boat, I was reluctant to do it at first, but with my grip problem, I need it.

I used the grab straps in anger at Bala recently. In a gale force wind, I must have gone over half a dozen times on the downwind leg. That mod was ace for getting me back in the boat - it did exactly what I wanted it to do. I come over to the rear quarter, get hold of the toestrap and the nearest grab strap and just pull myself in

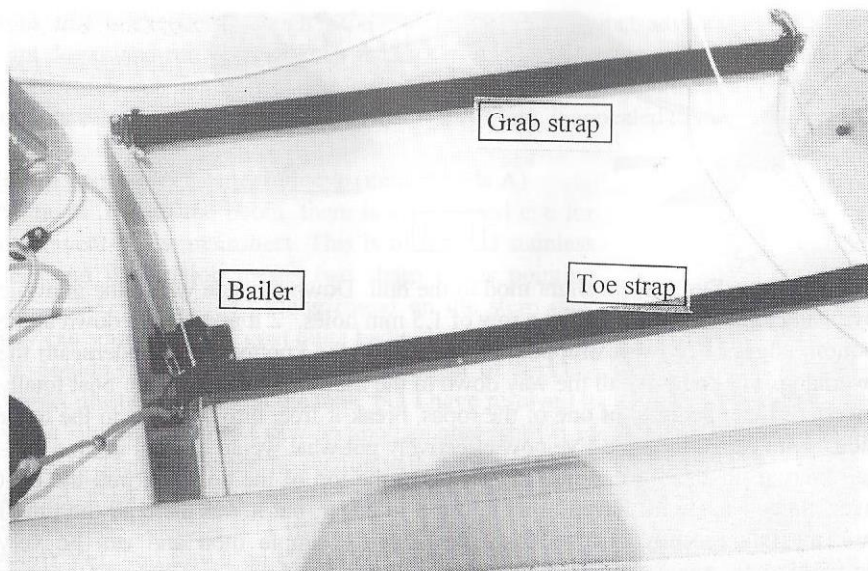


Fig 4

with both hands. It was brilliant, capsized, back up, sail on again, it was ace. I do sometimes sail with my feet on the opposite tank, I think most people do that at times, and I've tried to use the grab straps as toe straps but the body angle is all wrong. So there is no advantage in using them as alternative toe straps. If I sail in open competition I will take the straps off to be within class rules, for there cannot possibly be any advantage to be had from the end attachment clamps.

Spinniker (item 9, code R)

Now this was fun! That's all it was, fun, a lot of fun. I've sailed a Mirror a lot, so I am used to spinnikers, but on a Comet - - - ?! You must understand that I am one of those people who, when I see something I shouldn't really do, want to take up the challenge! This was never intended as a serious exercise, for to start with, we have an unstayed mast, so putting a spinniker up in anything resembling a serious blow, is rather silly. **Alan:** At the Nationals recently we had 4 bent masts in the first race, and one of them was a Mino! **Colin:** secondly, because the sail is sleeved, you can only take the spinniker off the top of the mast. Then there are the cleats required for the halliard, pole and the two spinniker sheets, all to be fixed somewhere. **Alan:** I think that perhaps we've had enough technical stuff for the average reader in this issue, so I suggest we keep those for Perihelion 45, but you succeeded with your spinniker, and here is your photograph, taken at Bala, to prove it!

(Photo: Colin Boys)

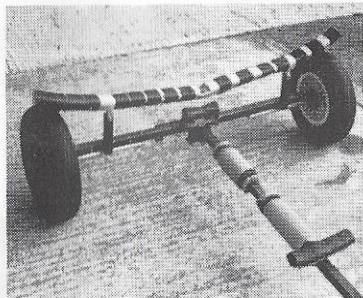


Colin: Yes, it worked. One day, my wife wanted some shopping so I beat my way all the way up to Bala town, tied up at the quay, did the shopping, back to the quay, shot the spinnaker and just sat in the back of the boat and let it tow me for about two and a half miles! It was good fun. **Alan:** Talking of fun, I hope you're going to put your photo in for the photo competition, if anything qualifies for the "Comet fun" category that does! **Colin:** That's what the Comet is all about, I wouldn't be without my Comet now, it's a magic boat for me.

Alan: Well, thank you Colin, I've enjoyed that immensely. In fact, that was only about half what we chatted about wasn't it, but more in the next Perihelion. Then I will include your details on fitting the spinnaker and your thoughts on the clew tie down. But before we stop here, over the page are some things to think about during the winter months:

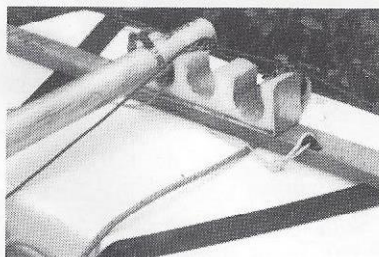
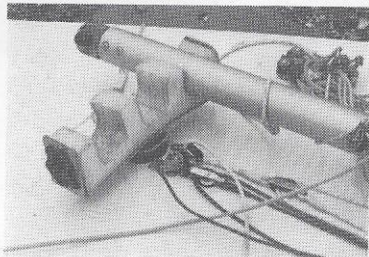
Launching trolley cradle for club use (item 10, code A)

Here is Colin's trolley, with a cradle made of T-section aluminium. You bolt it on instead of the two angled pads. He found that the boat never sat square on the pads. To bend the aluminium to shape, all you have to do is to place it on an anvil and hammer the flange to spread it a little.

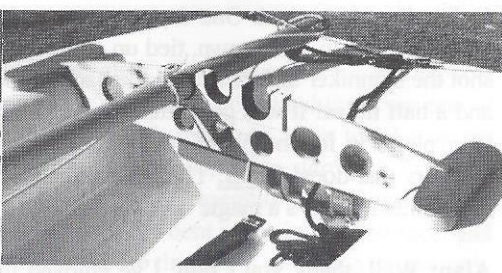
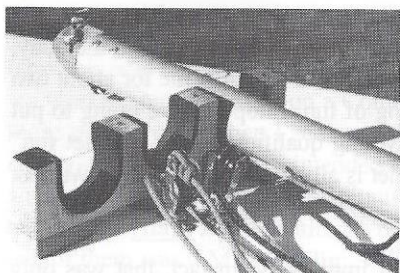


Spar tidy, for club use (item 11, code A)

A fairly simple idea, constructed from foam plastic, by Keith Bullock. Self explanatory really, note that the forward one plugs into the mast socket:



Or, here is a version by Harvey Martin, this time made of wood and rubber sheet:



Thanks are due to all the inventors and engineers involved in these Comet customization items and I hope that they are all correctly acknowledged.

AYLESBURY OPEN

Aylesbury Sailing Club had an entry of 27 boats for their Open Meeting on 20th July. 14 visitors from 10 clubs joined 13 home boats for a pleasant days racing.

The weather was hot and sunny, with a shifty north easterly breeze. Rob Kerry (Aylesbury) worked his way up from the middle of the fleet to win the first race from Alex Reeve (Taplow Lake) with Mark Wilkins 3rd (Chipstead) and Mike Palmer 4th (Aylesbury).

In the second race fortunes were won and lost as the wind came and went. Many who thought they were well ahead were caught and passed by those previously far behind. Alex Reeve, Mark Wilkins and Brian Welham (Taplow Lake) managed to stay at the front of the fleet though and finished in that order. Chris Robinson (Tamworth) was 4th.

Patches of mirror like calm contrasted with areas patterned by gentle ripples. When the breeze filled in some gained several places, while others were left stationary at the edge of a wind shadow. Luck and judgement were with Alex Reeve. Rob Kerry gave him a good race, but once ahead Alex was able to hold on to his lead. Robin Ballam (Crawley Mariners) was 3rd in the last race and Alex Gobell 4th (Aylesbury).

Results:

	1	573	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake
	2	370	Rob Kerry	Aylesbury
	3	657	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
	4	711	Brian Welham	Taplow Lake
	5	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley Mariners
	6	140	Mike Palmer	Aylesbury
First Junior	13		Andrew Hurford	Taplow Lake
First Lady	9	453	Christine Stack	Taplow Lake

Margaret Hylton (Comet 687)

A MINO IS NOT A COMET

I agree wholeheartedly with the Comet Class Committee in making the decision that Mino rigged dinghies are not Comet dinghies. I also agree that the Mino has a place and a part to play in sailing, to encourage and train the less competent and the lighter and younger sailing fraternity.

The Perihelion Issue 42 article, quoting Tony Thomas views, clearly indicates that there is a minority who still want to circumnavigate the strict One-Design principle of the Comet dinghy. It is imperative, as I expressed in Issue 32 that to successfully promote and retain the Comet Class popularity, meddling with the design must *NOT* be allowed otherwise it will signal the demise of the Class as other dinghy classes have found to their cost.

The Mino sail is an innovative idea for the minority and I recognise it's probably a useful one, but keep it as a separate class of boat. I have reefed my Comet in varying wind strengths with various quantity of turns around the mast but with little success. This is due to the design of the Comet sail, its cut, set and characteristics for the hull shape. When reefed the shape drastically changes and the boat performs horrendously. It is far better to retain full sail and adjust the controls to suit the conditions. If you end up capsizing and we all do that at times, then it's either a mistake, or more experience is required, not a different sail. Having been an Ocean sailor I accept that there are different sails available and allowed for large boats (yachts) in accordance with the Race Specifications. These can be used at the discretion of the Skipper/Tactician depending on the weather, but these boats are not dinghies and they are sailing under entirely different conditions.

Sitting on the bank watching and blaming the prevailing conditions for your boat damage or bruises just proves the lack of competence and why one should not be out in a Comet rigged dinghy under those circumstances in the first place.

Obviously the Mino dinghy will sail quite effectively with the specifically cut/shape sail for the size and characteristics of that sail but it is *NOT A COMET* sail nor is it a *COMET CLASS* boat.

I re-iterate my previous views on one-design principles: stop meddling with innovations; if you don't like the Comet as it is then change your class of boat. By all means have a Mino in its own right, the same as the Duo or Trio, but give it its own handicap if necessary and its own separate events. There is no reason for the Mino not to compete within a Comet class event or club handicap events but only if it's in its own class.

The Committee have got the problem correctly in context and the guidelines/ points stated in the Chairman's Report, Issue 42 are spot-on. Well done, keep it that way.

John Regnard (Comet 534)

(Editor's note: I thought that if I invited Tony Thomas to reply, we would get, on one double page, a concise statement of the arguments on both sides, to help the rest of us make up our minds. Below is what Tony wrote)

John Regnard is entirely correct. A Mino is not a Comet, according to the rules. However, his uncompromising defence of the one-design principle fails to address the suggestion which arose at the 1996 Nationals (Perihelion 39) and has been the subject of subsequent discussions viz: that the Comet Class should be brave and show the way by accepting something which could widen its appeal. I fully share John's enthusiasm for promoting and retaining Comet popularity. I suspect, though, that his definition of popularity over-emphasises the all-out, top level, racing aspect and neglects the wider picture of, maybe, weaker but no less enthusiastic owners who pay their subs and value the friendship of the Association.

John is very dismissive of anyone unable or unwilling to take a Comet out in difficult conditions and says, in effect "go away, we don't want you in our fleet". My view is simply that any racing dinghy, not just the Comet, is, by design, given as much sail as possible to make it go fast. By definition, there will therefore be conditions in which it is over-canvased and will test the strength and skill of many sailors beyond their limits. This is an increasingly unhealthy trend - exemplified by the Ultra 30s referred to so approvingly by John in Perihelion 32 (page 21). I see the same every week, from Lasers to the ISOs, RS 600s and other exotica sailed by my clubmates. My point was that the Mino provided a wonderful opportunity for the Comet to be the class which takes this on board and, by re-introducing the idea of good seamanship into the dinghy racing scene, would encourage every Comet owner to take more part, get more experience, more competition, sail more often and get more enjoyment.

One-design was invented to deter expensive innovations to make boats go faster or be more competitive, witness the furore over the mast crane. The Mino, contrariwise, makes it slower and less competitive at top level but enables more owners to compete, which ought to be encouraged.

I guess that John and I are of similar vintage but that, unlike me, he is fit, strong and healthy. His 50 years of sailing have led him to defend one-design come what may. My 50 years have made me tolerant of innovation in the best interests of the class, any class. John's advice to change class misses the point, they're all bad. The Comet could show the way with the Mino but I guess I shall remain a MINO-riety of one, or at least not many, branded (Perihelion 42 and 43) as "spectres" and "problems".

Tony Thomas (Comet 527)

● NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

1	159	<u>John Challener</u>	Mudeford	6	Nat. Champion
2	353	Guy Wilkins	Chipstead	11	Runner-up
3	40	Steve Cook	Hillhead	11	
4	642	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond	14	
5	573	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake	20	
6	657	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead	22	
7	150	<u>Robert Hamilton</u>	Taplow Lake	22	First Junior
8	63	Chris Robinson	Tamworth	27	
9	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham	34	
10	188	Simon Thompson	Crawley Mariners	35	
11	95	<u>Heather Back</u>	Mudeford	45	First Lady
12	312	<u>Jeff Bryant</u>	Chipstead	50	First Veteran
13	117	Michael Thompson	Crawley Mariners	51	
14	700	John Windibank	Chipstead	54	
15	549	Martin Vinson	Littleton	57	
16	57	Brian Jones	Taplow Lake	58	
17	314	Heidi Dodd	Littleton	63	
18	303	Derek Coleman	Coney	65	
19	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley Mariners	70	
21	247	Barry O'Herlihy	Chipstead	86	
22	195	Barry Noble	Hampton Pier	87	
23	496	Jim Robb	Welwyn	93	
24	50	Diana Thompson	Crawley Mariners	96	
25	163	Richard Munday	Haampton Pier	96	
26	259	Barry Sandle	Crawley Mariners	100	
27	500	Henry Jagers	Staunton Harold	107	
28	62	Emer Power	Chipstead	122	
=29	715	Tony Evans	Llandegfed	124	
=29	711	Brian Welham	Taplow Lake	124	
31	94	Andrew Bowes	Chipstead	126	

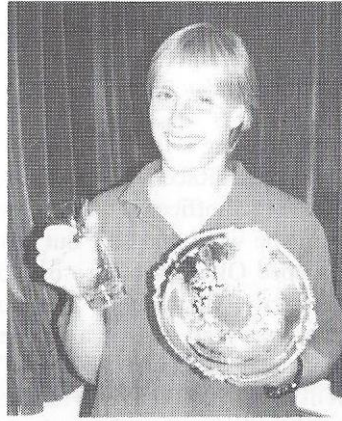
● MINO CHAMPIONSHIPS RESULTS

1	728	Elliot Willis	Chipstead	4
2	325	John Finch	Hampton Pier	10
3	377	Fred Kent	Hampton Pier	16

(Photos: Anne Browning)



**National Champion:
John Challenger**



**Ladies Champion:
Heather Back**



**A close 3rd :
Steve Cook**



**Mino Champion:
Elliot Willis**

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS REPORT

Hampton Pier Yacht Club hosted the Comet National Championships on Friday, Saturday and Sunday 29th, 30th, and 31st August.

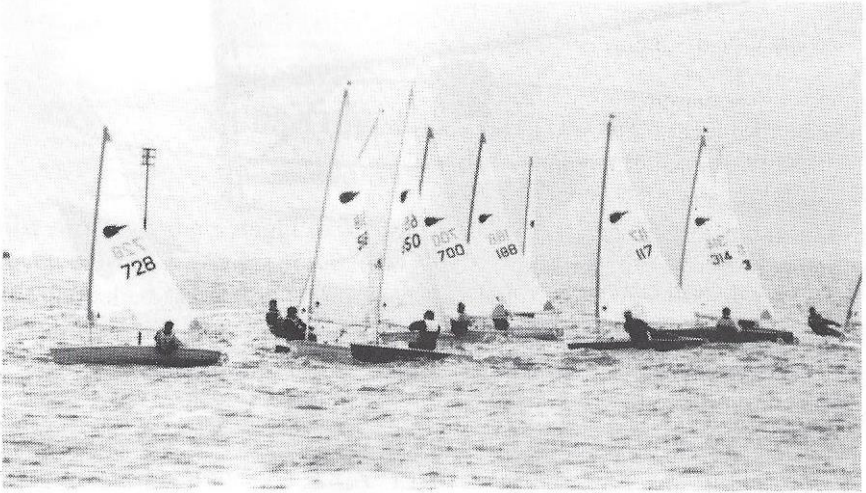
On Friday morning a force 4-5 wind greeted the 34 entrants for the first of the 6 scheduled races. Race 1 was a practice race, and in view of the conditions Terry Taunton the race officer set an inshore course of 2 laps. Only 18 boats ventured out to test the wind and sea, but most found they could cope, Terry then set a square shaped Olympic course out to sea for the first Championship race. The South Westerly wind had by this time increased to force 6, but most boats got away to a clean start despite a number of capsizes near the start line. The more experienced helms soon showed their mettle with John Challener (Mudeford SC), Guy Wilkins (Chipstead SC) and Steve Cook (Hillhead SC) opening up a substantial lead on the main pack, with Challener taking the gun well ahead of Cook and Wilkins. By Saturday morning the wind had eased to a westerly force 4, A trapezoid shaped course was set and race 2 got off to a good start from an unbiased line, Jake Sutton from Frensham Pond SC. worked his way up the long beat in pursuit of Steve Cook who had taken an early lead in his elderly boat (No 40). Challener was pushing hard from 3rd position and steadily narrowing the gap with some superb downwind sailing, the main pack were always in contention during the race, and it was nice to see some close sailing instead of the usual string of boats. Challener was unable to catch Cook and Sutton however and Wilkins was pushed down to 5th position.

For the second race of the day the race officer laid a similar course with the wing mark adjusted to take account of the strong ebb tide. Challener now had the bit between his teeth and took an early lead. Despite constant challenges from Wilkins and Cook he held his position up to the gun, and took the race with a comfortable margin. On Sunday morning the wind had abated and had backed to south easterly force 3, unusual for this stretch of the north Kent coast. Wilkins lead the race from the start, and his brother Mark showed well but was beaten into 3rd place on the line by Steve Cook. The final race was held with the course virtually unaltered. In the final analysis Challener emerged as the class champion but there was a tie break situation between Wilkins and Cook for second place. The tie was broken in favour of Wilkins after close scrutiny of the rules.

Local Hampton Pier YC Helm Barry Noble managed a creditable 22nd position in the main event. John Finch, also a Hampton Pier helm, gained a second place in the reduced Mino rig event.

The full results are to be found on page 16

(Photos: Anne Browning)

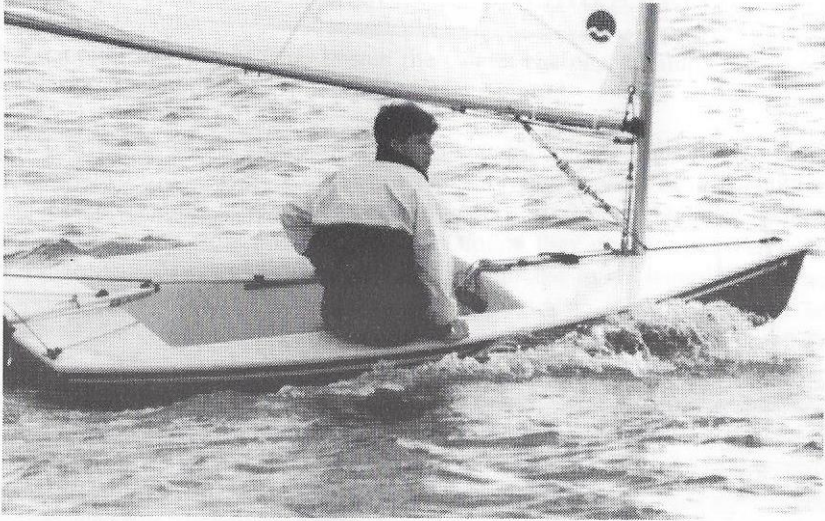


Elliot Willis, sailing a Mino, leading a group of Comets



Guy, Steve and Mark

(Photos: Anne Browning)



First Junior: Robert Hamilton



John Challener finishing a race



Chris Robinson,
close to Phillip Hossell, as usual

CLUBS THAT SAIL COMETS

Whilst some members might look on the Comet as a fun dinghy and might not even belong to a sailing club, it is good to bear in mind that the Comet is an established class with large fleets at several clubs.

Clubs with Comet fleets of over four are as follows:-

40 Chipstead	7 Chester
30 Crawley Mariners	7 Fishers Green
29 Littleton	7 Staunton Harold
27 Aylesbury	7 Sutton Bingham
22 Kingsmead	7 Warwick
15 Redesmere	6 Cotswold
13 Shearwater	6 Weston
11 Frensham Pond	5 Hampton Pier
11 Taplow Lake	5 Merthyr Tydfil
9 Tamworth	4 Elton
9 Welwyn	4 Glossop
8 Arden	4 Mudeford
8 Banbury	4 Wierwood
8 Burghfield	

(Editor's note: This page has been devised from a handout used by Comet Dinghies. The data is taken from the records they keep. The numbers may not be exactly correct because naturally they are changing all the time.)

● BUOYANCY AIDS

New Rule 1.2:

Lifesaving equipment and personal buoyancy

- - - - .Each competitor is individually responsible for wearing personal buoyancy adequate for the conditions.

EC LAW

EC law instituted in July 1995 says "all buoyancy aids must now conform to Newton CE35 standards and carry a CE stamp on the aid".

Older than July 95 ?

If your buoyancy aid is older than July 95 perhaps it's time you invested in your own safety and others who come to your assistance by obtaining a new buoyancy aid conforming to the new standards. Minimum Newton standard value is 50N and is aimed at the active racing sailor.

If you are an occasional sailor or weak swimmer a higher Newton value jacket would be probably be appropriate (75N or higher).

The price of a new aid (about £40) is small for the years of future use. The aid needs to be comfortable in all types of dress used when sailing, including over wet or drysuits.

Checklist before buying

This should include:

- a. Does it have the CE95 or later label ?
- b. Try it on and is it a snug fit ?
- c. Can you adjust the fit easily ?
- d. When you squat or raise your arms does the buoyancy aid remain in position ?.
- e. Is it compatible with other sailing gear you use ?
- f. Do you need pockets ?
- g. When you capsize will it be cumbersome to get back into the dinghy ?

Finally wear the buoyancy aid outside your sailing overalls or outer gear to enable the rescue crew to grab hold of something to pull you out of the water if you are knocked overboard, concussed in the water, or in other trouble.

This subject is very much a part of safety responsibilities of not only yourself but of the club policy on safety.

Insurance

Your Insurance may possibly be void if you avoid complying with this legal aspect now strengthened by inclusion as New Sailing Rule 1.

A good idea for Christmas presents, suggest a new buoyancy aid!

John Regnard (Comet 534)

(Editor's comment: The first time I leapt into a swimming pool wearing my buoyancy aid, it all came up round my neck. I soon fitted crotch straps! Those will be on my checklist too!)

● **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 1997

<u>Date</u>	<u>Club</u>		<u>Area</u>	<u>Contact</u>
Sat 11 Oct	Redsmere	NORTH	Steve Heyes	01625 583290
SUN 19 Oct	Kingsmead	EAST	<u>Geoff Kempton</u>	<u>01753 885782</u>

Editors Note: I have underlined Geoff Kempton's telephone number because this is the correct one, it was wrong in the full list in Perihelion 42. Sorry about that.

CHIPSTEAD OPEN

The Chipstead SC Comet Open was held on June 7th. Some 30 Comet helms attended (9 visitors), making it one of the best attended Comet Opens this year nationally.

The first race started with a variable wind speed and various wind shifts making the Chipstead lake, with its relative "narrows", tricky to navigate.

The wind increased in the afternoon for the second race. causing some capsizes and plenty of competitive hard racing.

After two races, with two wins out of two, Guy Wilkins (Chipstead SC) had an unbeatable position, this from an experienced helm who no longer regularly sails Comets at Chipstead, preferring this year instead to practice with the Mirror fleet.

Conditions slightly eased for the third race. The number of starters however fell, tiredness from the previous competitive two races, and plentiful sunshine both taking their toll.

Overall, an enjoyable and tiring day's sailing at a friendly family club, making the Chipstead Comet Open a feature on any south east based Comet sailor's calendar. Thoroughly recommended for 1998.

1	353	Guy Wilkins	Chipstead
2	94	Andrew Bowes	Chipstead
3	573	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake
Best Lady	62	Emer Power	Chipstead
Best Junior	207	Alex Thom	Chipstead
Best Senior	555	John Windibank	Chipstead
Middle of the Fleet	621	Gordon Flemons	Chipstead

Roger Norman (Chipstead Comet Class Captain, Comet 462)

TAPLOW LAKE OPEN

An excellent entry of 24, including 16 visitors, had mixed fortunes on 15th June at Taplow Lake. Pleasant weather and a moderate breeze augured well but a very shifty wind and early growth of weed presented problems both in course setting for the race officer and in route selection for the competitors. The weed was a surprise having come up very quickly but it was an inconvenience rather than a show-stopper. It did not augur well for the rest of the summer at Taplow but, equally surprising, it developed no more and within a couple of weeks began to steadily recede.

Five races were run with the best four results to count. Despite the difficult conditions which caused significant variations in the lower placings, as the day drew on there was no doubt as to the first three placings, especially the first. 16 year old Robert Hamilton from the home club achieved his first overall win in an open meeting by winning four of the five races, his "failure" being a fourth place! In doing so he beat two current National title holders, Mark Wilkins and Alex Reeve, into second and third places overall.

The five-race format was approved generally by the competitors but there was justified criticism in that the first two races were allowed to run for too long so that the day was quite a long one. The regular competitors also felt that they would not want all the open meetings to be the same and that the more traditional three-race format should not be totally abandoned. We shall probably repeat the experiment next year at Taplow Lake but each race should not exceed 40 minutes. A possible alternative is four races with three to count.

Overall Results:

1	Robert Hamilton	Taplow Lake
2	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
3	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake
4	Simon Thompson	Crawley Mariners
5	Brian Welham	Taplow Lake
6	John Windibank	Chipstead

Mark Taylor Comet Fleet Captain, Taplow Lake S.C.

FRENSHAM POND OPEN

June 21st dawned with quite a wind, enough for novices like me to decide to participate in spectator mode! Eventually this led to being volunteered to write the report for Yachts & Yachting, on the basis that I saw most of it. This report is a different one!

Twelve visitors came, including most of the usual travellers and we provided five more to make an entry of 17. No doubt some others had been put off by the weather forecast!

When I arrived the fleet were sailing the first race, or most of them were. Three were reefed and by then three had retired, Phillip Hossell, (trying I believe some more of his submarining) capsizing with a broken tiller extension joint and Michael Baxter capsizing and losing his wallet, with all his money and credit cards, due to the cover having come off his storage bin! But being Comet sailors, all were cheerful. Jake Sutton won that race with Robert Hamilton second and Alex Reeve third.

During lunch Phillip was provided with a replacement rudder and Michael was offered a replacement boat but he declined this. He did however find a replacement bin cover from somewhere enabling him to continue.

For the second race, the force 4 wind, gusting 5, got even worse, from the point of view of sudden windshifts. Half the fleet retired; Derek Coleman's comments on the wind were rather colourful, Phillip gave back the borrowed rudder and Michael put away his boat and joined me spectating. For that race I decided to video the fleet approaching a windward mark. This was interesting, including a windward capsizes by Ray Baker, sailing for only the 6th time in his newly acquired Comet (but he did finish), and a capsizes with extremely rapid recovery by Michael Thompson. Just 8 boats finished and toward the end I had to retreat to shelter when the rain tipped down in stair rods. The sailors battled on and the front of the fleet demonstrated, as usual, their capability of coping with the conditions (which was why I was videoing them). Alex took a big lead to win, with Jake second and Chris Robinson third. That meant that Jake had 1,2, Alex 3,1 and Robert 2,4, those three being the contenders for overall first place.

For the third race, the wind dropped generally, to about force 3, but still with some vicious gusts, and 11 of the original 17 entries started. There were no capsizes this time. In the event, Jake made certain of it by taking a lead from the start and extending it to the finish, with Robert second and Alex third.

At least there was one diversion for those not sailing the later races, they could look at Perihelion 43, displayed (about 5 ft square!) on the wall. But being Comet sailors - we're a friendly class - they seemed more inclined to sit and chin-wag!

Overall Results:

1	642	Jake Sutton	Frensham Pond
2	573	Alex Reeve	Taplow Lake
3	150	Robert Hamilton	Taplow Lake
4	63	Chris Robinson	Tamworth
5	657	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead
6	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley Mariners

Alan Browning (Comet 361, Frensham Pond S.C.)

EDITOR'S NOTES

Plenty of open meeting reports this time for the keen racers, but, as promised, an article, rather like a "Talking to . . ." article, on customizing the Comet. This is aimed particularly at non-racing Comet owners and the interviewee, Colin Boys of Frensham Pond S.C. has talked to me frankly about what he has done and what he might do in the future. The individual items are presented in the context of the Comet Measurement Rules and it is possible that, for racing, some might require a general meeting resolution. However, some of his mods are to do with the reduction in his ability when his hands become cold, particularly in recovery from capsize. Colin is not just a fun sailor but races regularly in the club, and to emphasise this you will find him on the cover this time. How about telling us about customizing **your** Comet ?

We have more comments on the Mino too, this time by John Regnard in praise of strict one-design. A Mino performance of merit was at the Nationals where Elliot Willis showed what can be done. Had his boat been recognised as a Comet, he would have come in the top 20% and possibly lifted the Junior prize too!

My request for contributions on sailing clothing has prompted an article by John Regnard on buoyancy aids. Read it, it could be important for you.

Some members write to me and add words like "print this if you wish". As they will know, I print everything unless asked not to. It's our newsletter, I want your views, comments etc. and I don't mind holding contributions over to a later issue if I get too many!

Alan Browning, Editor.

MERTHYR TYDFIL OPEN

Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club held their Comet open meeting on 28th June. It was an overcast day with force 3 wind in the morning dropping to around force 1 for the late afternoon blowing almost constantly stright down the valley from the north.

In the first race everyone had a good start and most helms made an effort to try to stay in clear wind towards the windward mark. But Paul Govier rounded it first after taking full advantage of a lift near the east bank. After this first beat the race became a procession with only one place changing, when on the second lap Robert Presley moved past Alun Hughes from 5th to 4th.

After lunch a slightly longer course was set, but the race followed exactly the same pattern. Paul Govier reached the windward mark first. Rhiaian Bevan and Phillip Hossell had a minor collision with each other and the mark following a wind shift just as they reached it. This allowed Mark Govier into second place. The other boats sorted out their positions down the three long running legs before starting the long beat back. No positions changed on the second lap as the field spread out in the wind that dropped to force 1.

For the final race a much shorter course was set with only approximately 100m to the windward mark. The race remained much closer for longer. Paul Govier managed to round the windward mark just ahead of Robert Presley. Robert managed to follow Paul closely throughout the downwind legs but as soon as they turned upwind Paul managed to pull away a little each lap. Phillip Hossell held third position throughout until on the fourth and final downwind leg Mark Govier managed to overtake him. Mark maintained this position on the final beat to the line.

Overall Results:

1	419	Paul Govier	Merthyr Tydfil
2	460	Mark Govier	Merthyr Tydfil
3	25	Robert Presley	Cotswold
4	650	Philip Hossell	Evesham
5	205	Alun Hughes	Merthyr Tydfil
6	420	Rhiaian Bevan	Merthyr Tydfil

Mark Govier, (Comet 460)



Paul Govier, winning the Merthyr Tydfil open

(Photo: Liz Hossell)

COMBS OPEN

At 8.30 am on Saturday 19th July 1997 Combs reservoir was bathed in glorious sunshine, but the surface of the lake was like a mirror. Fortunately, by the time the competitors started arriving, gentle ripples had spread over almost the whole lake. The breeze developed into the usual fluky, shifty, where's-it-coming-from-now Combs wind, and reading the shifts was a jolly useful skill to have.

A total of 14 boats took part (three more than last year - keep 'em coming!) and the racing was very competitive from the start. The first race was dominated by Steve Heyes (Redesmere), Phillip Hossell (Evesham) and Peter Hayes (Redesmere) who shared the lead between them, until Steve fought off the other two to win.

Phillip again led off the second race, but was overtaken by Sue Pollard (Combs) until a spectacular wind-shift threw her into the drink at the end of the second lap. Phillip was gradually overhauled and eventually finished fifth behind Peter Hayes, John Edwards (Chester), Mike Smith (Redesmere) and Brian Herring (Winsford Flash).

At the start of the third race (two to count), five helms were in with a chance of winning the meeting. With sunburnt arms and perspiring brows they flung themselves again into the teeth of the ... er ... breeze. The tropical conditions were the cause of at least one mishap - newcomer John Beswick (Winsford Flash) capsized while executing Baseball-cap Overboard drill. As the wind failed, Peter Hayes, Phillip Hossell and Brian Herring fought a battle royal for the honours of the day. The outcome was in doubt until the last lap, but Peter finally clinched it, beating Phillip by the narrowest of margins (witnesses' estimates varied between 4 inches and 6 inches! (see the photograph snapped by Liz Hossell).

Members of the host club were impressed by the friendliness and competitive racing of the Comet sailors, and interest in the class is growing here all the time. Many thanks to all who attended - it was a perfect day!

The full results were:

1.	670	Peter Hayes	Redesmere
2.	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham
3.	633	John Edwards	Chester
4.	331	Steve Heyes	Redesmere
5.		Brian Herring	Winsford Flash
6.	508	Mike Smith	Redesmere
Ladies prize:	235	Sue Pollard	Combs

Sue Pollard, (Combs Sailing Club, Comet 235)



Peter Hayes winning the third race at Combs by 4 inches from Phillip Hossell

(Photo: Liz Hossell)

● PERIHELION

My computer thanks those of you who sent "get well" messages, and it feels quite well now. Some people seemed to think that I might be new to computer troubles, but the first computer I programmed was D.E.U.C.E. in the 1950s. In those days the maintenance men worked on the machine from 8.30 to 10.00 am EVERY DAY. It was horrible to program too, but it worked.

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

Alan Browning, Editor

● RE-ISSUE OF PERIHELION ARTICLES

So far I have distributed 101 booklets of past Perihelion articles to 27 people, about 17 of each booklet. Most people (9) asked for the first 4 booklets, 7 people took all 6 booklets and another 7 people wanted just the two booklets by Keith Lamdin. This response is pleasing to me and indicates that there was a need for them and my efforts are appreciated. But, if you request booklets, please make cheques payable to me, not the Class Association. It saves me bothering Derek.

Alan Browning

NOVICES CLUB ?

I was particularly pleased with the requests for my "Raw beginner" booklets, because some obviously came from members, like myself, who are novices at sailing as well as being new to the Comet. I will be contacting those members again with a view to forming a small group of like souls who can exchange experiences. This will be no doubt by post, considering the distances involved, but could involve live discussions from time to time. Correspondence between novices will not normally be printed in Perihelion but if it is, it will be done anonymously.

Alan Browning Novice, Comet 361

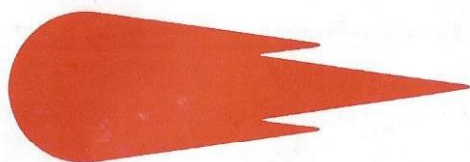
CANOE CLUBS, YACHT CLUBS TENNIS CLUBS, DINGHY CLUBS ?

When I get contributions on racing events they are often cluttered up with "S.C." everywhere. Now I suppose most people sail their dinghies at sailing clubs and I would have thought we could take that as read. As you may have noticed, I delete most of them, unless it conveys something, for example, someone who may not own a Comet writing a report on behalf of a club.

I am almost tempted to cut off appendages to the club names too, do Crawley Mariners wear nautical hats and pigtails ? If we have Taplow Lake and Frensham Pond, perhaps we should have Kingsmead Gravel Pit, Warwick-on-Avon, Glossop Reservoir, Mudeford Harbour and Weston-on-Sea. Because curtailment might offend people, I leave these appendages on, unless I'm pushed for space.

Club names have a habit of appearing in the main text of meeting reports. Surely we only need to mention a sailor's club once, and that's often in the list of results.

Alan Browning, Editor



Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association