



NEWSLETTER NUMBER 48
AUTUMN 1998

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Front cover:

Tony Best, winner at Naseby and runner-up at Aylesbury this year,
photographed at the Kingsmead Open in 1995

(Photo: Anne Browning)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

By the time you read this, I will have completed my first twelve months as chairman and be reviewing our plans for next year. I should like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped over the year: the Committee, on whom so much of the work falls (especially our Treasurer and Secretary); those members who take the trouble and interest to put experiences, ideas, and sometimes concerns to us; the rest of you who join in the events and provide so much inspiration just from observing the pleasure you get sailing your Comets.

The 1998 season is now drawing to a close but there are still some key opens left to decide the Aphelion and Orbital positions. The weather this year has been very mixed and has not often provided much encouragement but, as always, the meetings have been keenly contested. To date I have sailed at nine opens and both championships this year, It has been particularly pleasing to see a number of new faces on the scene - at both ends of the fleet! 1999 should see even more clubs for you to visit. We need your continued support for these events and if you can persuade one or two more of your fellow club sailors to join you for a day out on "foreign" waters, so much the better.

Later in this issue, you will find a report of the racing at the Association (Tidal) Championships held at Brightlingsea over the weekend of 25/26th July. It was one of the best weekends of the summer and the host club treated us to excellent facilities and hospitality. The local fish and chips were first rate too. For those, like myself, camping, the site could not have been handier, right by the dinghy park. Brightlingsea has reasonably sheltered estuary waters and, although we had a good range of wind strengths and sea conditions over the two days, even those of us unused to the sea were able to enjoy some really good sailing. I will not forget the sea-breeze, waves, and sunshine on Saturday afternoon, nor the race on the Sunday morning which started as a battle with the tide but ended in a plane to the finish. Thank you, Brightlingsea.

Norah and I have been continuing with the recruitment drive. We have gone through all our past records and also, those held by Comet Dinghies (thanks, Andrew, for your cooperation). It has been an interesting and very enjoyable, if lengthy, exercise from which we now have names and addresses (probably correct!) for practically every one of the 750 Comets currently in existence. We are writing to all the non-members to encourage them to join us. We will keep you posted with the results!

A slightly shorter report than usual but I expect like you I have a lot to do this time of the year and less time to marshal my thoughts. Keep sending us your

ideas and comments and we will do our best to please you, after all it is your Association. And one final reminder, you might just have time to send me some more entries for the photo competition: before the Pingewood open, please.

Good Sailing,

Henry Jagers, Chairman

BUILDER'S REPORT

I have not long returned from two weeks holiday in Falmouth, motor-boating mainly, but also some pleasant sails in a Comet and a Trio. Mylor near Falmouth would be a fantastic venue for some sort of Comet event one day, in conjunction with Duos and Trios possibly. It's a great area for cruising as well as racing.

We had fantastic weather but up until then the British summer was pretty grim. This, plus the "distraction" of the World Cup were greatly responsible for a quiet start to the summer, business wise.

As reported at the A.G.M. the early part of the season was excellent with Comets going to Henley, Blakeney, Wraysbury, North Devon Yacht Club, 3 in one evening to Staunton Harold, Llyn Brenig (they have since sold their Byte and bought a secondhand Comet as well!), Oxford S.C. at Farmoor, Littleton, Redditch and another for Chipstead amongst others.

Things have recently picked up a bit and next week (early September) a second Comet is going to Farmoor and one to Carsington.

Southampton Boat Show will be drawing to a close as you read this, and I'm impatiently waiting for my London Boat Show stand allocation.

An Ocean World Clothing order form is included in this Newsletter. It really is top quality and can be personalised with boat names and sail number. A small royalty in the form of credit goes to the Class Association at the end of the season, so don't be surprised if you see baseball hats, sweatshirts etc. as prizes next year.

Andrew Simmons, Comet builder

(Editor's note: Mylor is good for Comet supporters, within easy reach of many other superb beaches and other tourist attractions. Good camping sites too)

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

NORTHERN AREA

Combs

1	670	P Hayes
2	331	S. Heyes
3	585	B Herring
4	641	P Hinde
5	222	R Bradshaw
6	235	S Pollard

Staunton Harold

1	670	P Hayes
2	63	C Robinson
3	650	P Hossell
4	532	J Coppenhall
5	619	J Orchard
6	643	K Appleby

WESTERN AREA

Merthyr Tydfil

1	650	P Hossell
2	419	P Govier
3=	25	R Presley
3=	460	M Govier
5	183	M Gingell
6	715	A Evans

Cotswold

1	650	P Hossell
2	63	C Robinson
3	419	P Govier
4	707	D Coleman
5	25	R Presley
6	460	M Govier

SOUTHERN AREA

Taplow Lake

1	150	R Hamilton
2	573	A Reeve
3	188	S Thompson
4	500	H Jagers
5	565	R Smallwood
6	99	P Luttmann

Hillhead

1	40	S Cook
2	549	M Vinson
3	314	H Dodd
4	99	P Luttmann
5=	745	N Warren
5=	43	A Hooper
5=	162	M Bromley
5=	117	M Thompson
5=	565	R Smallwood

EASTERN AREA

Chipstead

1	657	M Wilkins
2	549	M Vinson
3	188	S Thompson
4	555	J Windibank
5	314	H Dodd
6	518	R Ballam

Naseby

1	625	A Best
2	500	H Jagers
3	585	B Herring
4	669	G Parry
5	650	P Hossell
6	745	N Warren

Aylesbury

1	650	P Hossell
2	625	A Best
3	711	B Welham
4	745	N Warren
5	63	C Robinson
6	99	P Luttmann

Hampton Pier

1	650	P Hossell
2	63	C Robinson
3	700	J Windibank
4	323	A Walter
5	99	P Luttmann
6	62	E Power

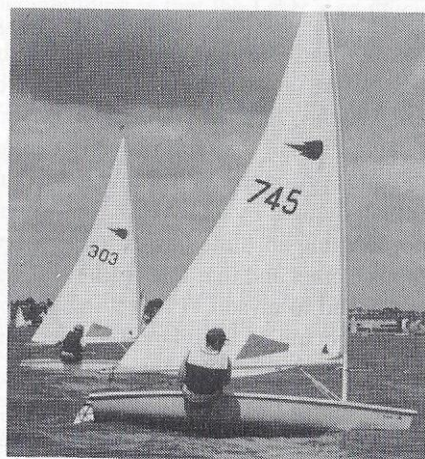
ACTION AT BRIGHTLINGSEA



Mark Wilkins followed by Heidi Dodd, John Windibank and Barry Sandle



Brian Herring



Nick Warren and Derek Coleman

(Photos: Andrew Simmons)

TALKING TO ... ROBERT HAMILTON

Alan Browning: You've had some very good results recently haven't you, last year you won the open meeting at your own club, Taplow, and achieved three other open meeting 3rds with overall 7th and the Junior trophy in both of the championships. This year you again won Taplow and in the Nationals, although you only took part in two of the three days, you again carried off the Junior trophy, winning one race and not finishing below 3rd in any of the other three races you sailed!

My usual first question, would you please sketch out your sailing background, where did you first see a Comet and what attracted you to the boat?

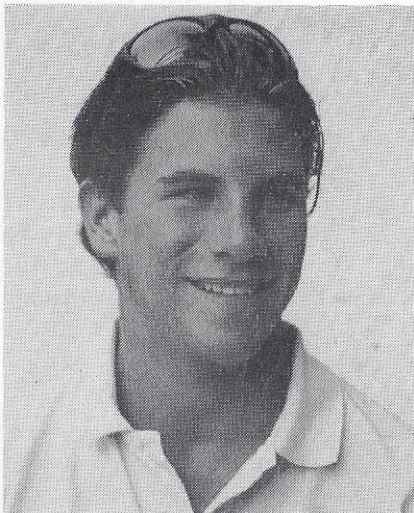


Photo: Anne Browning

Robert Hamilton: I did actually start in a Topper. I was about 12 when my dad bought a Topper and we took it to the Lake District. I learnt on Coniston Water, just sailing out and back again and got hooked from there. Then we joined Maidenhead Sailing Club where they had an Optimist club, I enjoyed that for a few weeks and my grandad started building me an Optimist. Before it was finished the Optimist club fizzled out and I was enjoying the Topper so much that I never did sail the Optimist. My dad got hooked too and bought a Laser. Then I did an RYA course at Taplow Lake club (it was called ICI, Slough then) and was actually taught by Tony Best, but of course having been sailing the Topper I was not learning absolute basics. After a few days Tony very kindly let me have a go in his Comet and that felt brilliant! It was so much more powerful than the Topper and I said to myself "I'm getting one of these". So I was racing the Topper, but Taplow being so far inland the winds are not often more than force 1 or 2 and the races were never particularly exciting. Often it was just me or two of us sailing Toppers and I soon got to the stage where only one other Topper sailor could beat me, that was Brian Welham. Then Brian left the Toppers and bought a Comet, so I had no other Toppers to race against. That got me really interested in the Comet but it took a whole winter to get hold of one, it was Tony who found one for sale. In the club we also had Alex Reeve who'd just come second in the Nationals, Tony, Brian and Alex were much better than me and Comet competition became very appealing. With the Comet there was so much more competition for me at

the club. At first I was at the back of the fleet, using the original sail of my old Comet (number 150). After a year or two I had done a couple of opens, including a very windy Pingewood, where I came 5th, to me a very, very good result. Straight after that I bought a new (Morrison) sail, planning to use it for big events. Slightly stupidly I began to use it at club level and now I choose between that sail and a new Hyde I've bought recently.

Alan: Has experience in any other class of dinghy been particularly helpful in sailing the Comet ?

Robert: I've been doing Laser sailing and Comet sailing, but I've always been competing seriously in the Comet. I've done a few opens with the Laser, but that's a 25 year old boat with a fairly grotty sail. I can't compete very well with it but I do think I've learned quite a bit from sailing it. It's a different kind of sailing, the whole fleet's out there to win, which you don't have with Comets and I think that has made me a little more assertive, a bit more aggressive. I decided that's what I wanted, I wanted to win, I didn't like being pushed around by Laser sailors. The Lasers have much bigger fleets, the start lines are quite aggressive, you can't just flap around. In a Comet, if you're not in the right place it doesn't really matter, you can often poke your way through somewhere. You don't have a second chance in a Laser, races are won and lost on the start line, if you're not in the first 5 you're unlikely to get up there. But the Comets are a very friendly fleet, while still having a good standard of sailor.

Comparing the Comet and Laser, the immediate thing is that the Laser's so much more powerful. It's really just a racing boat, it's not for cruising or pottering around in. You have to sail a Laser, you can't just sit back and be sailed, you have to work the boat. Competing in Laser races showed me differences between the Comet and the Laser, it got me thinking. I always found that the Comet was more fun in a strong wind. Although the Laser would go probably twice the speed, there was no enjoyment there. In the Laser you could go so fast that you couldn't see anything, you could hardly breathe for the water, but the Comet, being so unstable, I found much more exciting. But with the Laser, until recently I've not been heavy enough to be really competitive. I could do it at club level, but as soon as the wind got up all the experienced sailors went away from me. In a blow there's a special way to sail a Laser, it's not like a Comet. You pull everything in drum tight, sheet "block-to-block", and you just hike out. Everything then you do on the tiller. Everything on the Comet's different. The Comet has always had a very soggy, floppy sail, even new they're very curvy whereas the Laser sail, in comparison, looks dead flat. Another thing about the Laser, the boom being so low it gets you moving quickly about the boat. When I was lighter I really had to hike out hard in the Laser. Both those things have helped me with the Comet. It speeded up my tacking in the Comet. I think sailing any other boat will get you thinking and help to prevent your sailing

becoming stale. I've just done over 3 weeks sailing a Laser every day on a large lake in France, it's improved my Laser sailing no doubt and I will be interested to see if it's helped with the Comet too.

Another thing with the Laser is that a Laser will go over in a strong wind, say on the beat, because it has such a flat hull. Once it's at a certain angle, that's it, you've lost it. The Optimist is the same. With the Comet hull being so round you can almost completely capsize it and you can get it back because there's still quite a lot of hull in the water. Upwind I think there's not too much of a problem with a Comet, it's quite a wide boat with not a particularly high mast, you actually have quite a bit of leverage on a Comet. With a Laser, having a very tall mast on a very thin boat, you have to create the leverage yourself. Downwind in the Comet there are definite problems. I think we all have them, especially running. It's the hull again, I think the biggest problem with the Comet is there's no buoyancy at the front. It goes from 1 metre plus wide to nothing in a matter of feet. The Laser never gets that sharp. It's impossible to nose-dive a Laser I've found. The Laser seems to skim over the water whereas the Comet has to force its way through. However, this is a characteristic about the Comet I love, I think it adds to the challenge of strong wind sailing.

Alan: Which of the Laser and Comet is more difficult to sail on a run?

Robert: The Comet. In the Laser you just sit there and as long as you can stop it death-rolling it will be fine. With the Comet, I like the fact that it's unstable, well it's not actually unstable but it's very, very responsive. (**Alan:** I think the aerodynamicist would think of it as low inertia and low damping in roll). **Robert:** A twitch on the tiller going downwind will probably throw you in, where you can get away with it in a Laser. Then again it's partly because the Laser's got such a small rudder compared with the Comet.

Alan: You can obviously do well both at sea and inland with the Comet, which do you prefer, sea or inland sailing?

Robert: I've only sailed twice on the sea, at the Sheppey and Hampton Pier Nationals, so I have to say that I'm an inland sailor. Doing those Nationals really was "in at the deep end". On that last day at Sheppey, I set my goal to finish the race. I did it and was glad that I did. That was one of my biggest turning points in my strong wind sailing. If now I had a wind of force 4, 5 going 6 on a lake I'd think "well, if I've done it on the sea - -". There were waves crashing down at the Hampton Pier Nationals too and it took a few attempts to get the nerve to tackle the downwind runs. I think in the last race I got it together, everything started to feel better. I got the up-and-down-the-wave bit sorted and suddenly found I was moving up the fleet. Had I had a few more races I think I could have

improved my result quite a lot. Sea sailing is a different way of sailing, I mean you can spot sea sailors as soon as they get out there. They don't tack much, go off on two or three tacks to make the whole beat, lake sailors tend to tack too much, tack on everything. However, Guy and Mark Wilkins seem to do superbly in both.

Alan: Not many Comet sailors seem to be able to control the boat well in a blow. Do you agree and have you any advice for us?

Robert: The aspect of racing I like best is beating in a strong wind. I think everyone can cope with strong winds upwind, you can after all let the sail flog if you have to. Really I don't have much of a problem because I'm so much bigger than I was a few years ago. A strong wind is now my preferred wind. I'm a heavyweight (12-13 stones) and I'm probably too heavy for the Comet really. One of the biggest things is hiking and I got from a book the idea of placing one foot above the other, that was amazing. Swapping between that position and the other foot on top or with legs separated is better for the legs. Another suggestion from that book was to duck under the hull if you are thrown into the water from a leeward capsizes. That book (by a Laser World Champion Glen Bourke) set me thinking about what was good for me. Everyone has to find out what feels good for them, if you're beating and it doesn't feel right, then you're probably not doing it right. All I do when I'm beating is literally to hike out and try to keep the tell-tales all streaming, and go for clear air.

Downwind I think very few can really cope with strong winds well, by that I mean getting the most out of the boat as well. I think most of it is nerve, not skill. If you can get the boat flat and going and sit out on the back you should be OK. The waves at the Hampton Pier Nationals taught me a lot about going downwind. I had to learn to move my body around and try to keep the nose out of the water. I've never been that good downwind. I can keep up with most of the fleet but Brian Welham sails it better downwind, Jake is incredibly quick downwind, in any wind. Henry's quick too. The thing that matters in learning to sail in a blow is hours spent in the boat. The first time I took my Comet out, it must have been force 4 - 5, I'd only got 100m from the jetty when I nose-dived and was catapulted out of the boat. I'd seen Alex Reeve do the same thing in his first time in a Comet, so I was not too disheartened. I was absolutely overwhelmed by the power in the Comet and how easy it was to dunk it in! The Comet looks nice, with its curvy hull, but actually it's a very tricky boat to sail, it's not easy. I'm still learning to sail it and if I don't sail it for a while it tends to be a little bit dodgy when I go out next time.

Alan: Have you any thoughts on light wind sailing that might help others?

Robert: It's very difficult for me to comment. If you'd asked me a couple of years ago, when I was lighter, I could probably have given you something helpful but with

people like Brian Welham and Henry Jagers around I don't now reckon much on my chances of winning in very, very light winds. What I do is just to keep the boat moving. It doesn't matter where you sit as long as the boat's moving. Don't worry about where the boat's pointing, if you can get the boat moving you will eventually be able to get it back on track. Obviously don't go in the opposite direction, but don't worry about how high you're pointing. Also I try to keep dead still, moving about won't speed you up. I find that every time I move, the boat will sink slightly in the water and that stops me dead. Often I'll leave the dagger board down and lie over the place where it would be, and look up at the sail and around me. If I do want the dagger board up, I'll put one knee the other side and get my body weight over it. It's not very comfortable though. The Comet has a very rounded hull, and heeling, to reduce the skin drag, is easy, it will sit at any angle you like. The mast is incredibly far forward in a Comet so it is quite easy to lift the stern out of the water. To do this some people creep up to the front of the boat and sit over the cleats, I used to do this sometimes but now I'm heavier I don't do it, it would probably sink the boat! It's more important to keep the boat moving and, because in light winds you're not going to be going very fast, you are likely to be in one position for a considerable time - I'd rather be moderately comfortable.

Alan: What things are uppermost in your mind when racing?

Robert: I just pick what I think is the best course and sail it. I concentrate on sailing fast on the beat, I probably don't sail it as tactically as others do, but I probably sail it faster which makes up. I go for clear air too, and there's not a lot more that you can really do. In one race at the recent Nationals I was over the line and started last of nearly 50 boats, but up the first beat I pulled up to 15th. It took me the rest of the race to pull up to 3rd, but I just went for clear air every time. That applied to the reaches too, I went well below the group and got a slightly different wind. Occasionally it didn't pay off but other times I took 5 or 6 boats. It's almost impossible to overtake when you're tight on someone's stern, you're very lucky to get past. Also I avoid luffing duels, they waste precious time. I stay out of trouble, I've never got myself into a protest and I've never protested anyone, I steer clear of that, I don't think it speeds you up at all. It's too easy to get bogged down with rules and worry about the situation that's going to happen. If I see what looks like a bad situation at a mark, I'll often let everyone go round it first. They will be arguing about who touched who and I'll sail round them. There's nothing worse than sailing a race wondering if you were right or wrong. I never think about rules when I'm out there, port and starboard, that's about it. It seems to me that it's the middle of the fleet where all the hassle is, at the front of the fleet there aren't really any arguments, in fact in that race at the Nationals when I was at the front with Jake, we had quite a nice chat!

You can go too far trying to sail the best course. On an inland lake the wind usually shifts a lot and to follow the shifts you have to do a lot of tacking and twitching. I don't do that, I just go for speed. I panic too sometimes, though I try not to. It shows in the number of races when I've been in the lead up to the last mark and then lost it. The worst one was at Kingsmead when winning the race would have won me the meeting. My panic then was about the speech I would have to make, and before I knew it I was going into the weed. I had to tack off and Mark Wilkins was able to pass and take the honours, there was nothing I could do! When I was doing it I didn't realise that I wasn't concentrating, when I think back I have no recollection of him overtaking me. We learn from our mistakes!

Alan: What do you think of the Comet as a one-design boat?

Robert: The Laser is a very tightly controlled boat with its many rules, which I think is a good thing. It is the only boat that is that tight on rules and it's good because it's fair, all boats are basically the same. All Laser sails are the same, but with the Comet we have three makes of sail being used, though you can now only buy the Hyde sail. Especially at the top of the fleet there has been a lot of discussion on which is the best sail. **Alan:** I'm not sure that the change to the Hyde sail was done correctly, I don't remember the Class Association giving its approval. **Robert:** They claimed that there was absolutely no difference, but there is. Many thought that the Morrison, despite problems with the window, was a better quality sail. **Alan:** Yes, but there were problems of quality control with the Morrison, especially at the sail head, computer cutting ought to improve that. **Robert:** Though the sail might be stiffer at first, it seems that the Hyde material is a lot lighter. I wouldn't dare use my Hyde in a force 5, it wouldn't be a new sail any more! The Morrison seems to go on and on. I won my race at the Nationals with the Morrison. Again, I wouldn't use my Hyde in a very light wind, it just doesn't set, but that's partly because it's a brand new sail. Of course an objective comparison is impossible because nobody has got a brand new Morrison. But it takes all sorts, some sail the Comet with very baggy sails, others very tight. I mix and match myself, use a different sail setting every time I go out. I don't find it makes a great deal of difference as long as it looks good, I can't sail by numbers, like some do. I don't use a lot of kicker, on a reach I'll give it a tug. I don't use any downhaul, except in a strong wind.

In the hull too there are differences between boats. My boat is in theory lighter than later ones because the gunwale overhang is smaller, other small manufacturing changes have been introduced from time to time. I don't believe there is any difference between old and new hulls, speedwise.

Alan: Have you any views on the Mino rig? Part of the idea was to provide a boat suited to young, light sailors, but we don't seem to have many of them do we! Do you know any juniors who have tried the Mino?

Robert: The only Mino sailor I know is Elliot Willis. He was proficient at Sheppey but a lot better at the Hampton Pier Nationals. I was having to struggle to beat him. There are very few juniors in the Comet scene, I only know one, he's good but doesn't go to many events because of his involvement in swimming. He's not light enough for the Mino rig. Because I sail a Laser I think the Comet sail is relatively small, I've always said that I'm never going to reef the Comet and I never have, I think you need that power. But the Mino rig obviously suited Elliot, he was only about 7 stones and 13 or 14 years old, so there's obviously a place for a boat with that size of sail. The main trouble with the Mino is that there's no such thing as a fleet at the moment, though I do think that the Mino should have its own separate class. A market for the Mino is for Optimist and Topper sailors to progress to, and from my experience the top Optimist sailors could wipe the floor with nearly all at the top of our Comet fleet. The same probably goes for the Toppers, and they're also a very big fleet, but the natural thing for them seems to be to progress to the Laser Radial or the Laser 4.2. They are used to competition races of 100 boats and the Mino in comparison is not attractive to them. I do believe we need to encourage more juniors somehow.

Alan: What about the future for you?

Robert: Hopefully it will be University from September '99 where I might get some sailing in. With A-levels this year I haven't done any real sailing at all. I would like to be able to do a few events before the end of this season. After my unfortunate result at the Nationals, having to miss the second day, I've set my sights firmly on doing well at the '99 Inland Championships.

Alan: Well Robert, it's been nice for Anne and I to be with you today, and we wish you all the best for the future.

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

1. **John Regnard's article in Perihelion 46** was most useful in pointing out that paperwork is not always passed on to new owners. It also alerted the committee to the fact that a revised set of Measurement Rules is overdue.

Although a revised edition of the Constitution was circulated following the changes approved by the AGM on 25th May 1996, the committee intends to send copies of both the Constitution and Measurement Rules to members with their renewal receipts in January 1999.

2. **Now that our Championships are over for this year, you may like to know how they are financed.**

Normally the host club charges a fee which covers their costs for running the event - rescue boats, catering staff etc. That fee may be directed at the individual sailor, or it may be negotiated with CCA when we agree a minimum amount based on the anticipated attendance. In the first instance this means that if the event is not well supported, the host club is out of pocket, and in the second, the Class Association makes up the difference between the agreed amount and what has been taken in entry fees.

The host club usually, but not always, provides some of the prizes within the price, dependant on the number of entries. The Association has a specific range of prizes, which cannot always be provided from the entry fee, and the Association then pays for the extra ones. In some situations, the Association has paid for all of the prizes, which has resulted in a rather lower entry fee to competitors.

Obviously the Association pays for all of the competitor and travellers mementoes as these are a recognition of the contribution made by a great number of members to the success of the season's racing.

Hopefully this will go some way to explaining the apparent discrepancies between entry fees for national events. We aim to keep entry fees as low as possible, which has entailed some subsidization by the Association. If the RYA suggestions, with regard to holding national events only at recognised centres, ever come to pass, the cost of running such an event will invariably rise.

3. **Colin Boys is quite correct in his reading of the Class rules in respect of sail changes, they are not forbidden.** Sailing instructions are, of course, a matter for individual clubs. The Class Association ruling on Mino rigs are a

separate issue, and the guidelines for sailors can be found in Perihelion 42.

Norah Gould, Class Secretary

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1998

<u>Date</u>	<u>Club</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Telephone</u>
Sat 26 Sept	Pingewood	Training day	Alison Walker	01189 819974
SUN 27 Sept	Pingewood	SOUTH	Alison Walker	01189 819974
Sat 10 Oct	Redesmere	NORTH	Graham Day	01625 521974
SUN 18 Oct	Kingsmead	SOUTH	Geoff Kempton	01753 885782

THE TROLLEY DOLLY'S LAMENT

Oh! I do like to help you Comet sailors
Whenever you return from o'er the seas.
I do like to have your trolley waiting
So that you can come ashore with ease.
But they are oh! so hard to find
Unless you've been so kind
As to sign them with a mark,
And the number of your barque
When your Comet's by the seaside, by the sea.

(not to mention anywhere else where Comets
gather together).

Anon.

TIDAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

This year's Tidal Championship was held at Brightlingsea SC in the Colne estuary over the weekend of 25/26th July. Weather was fine and warm with a good range of wind and sea conditions.

Race one was in very light airs with a strong tide over the start line resulting in a diverse choice of routes to the first mark: an observer commented "who's racing?". By the end, Simon Thompson had lost an early lead to Mark Wilkins, finishing third behind Heather Back after a frustrating race for all.

The second race started in a fresh sea breeze and, away from the sheltered start line, wind against tide gave an uncomfortable sea leading to several spectacular capsize off wind. Back had an early lead with Henry Jagers but both were overpowered on the beat leaving Martin Vinson, Wilkins, Heidi Dodd and John Windibank to contest the lead. Wilkins first, Dodd second, Windibank third, Vinson fourth.

Race three, Sunday morning, started in a light breeze on an incoming tide. The fleet split between opposite banks and some confusion over the first mark led to redress being sought and granted later ashore. After a long beat, Jagers was in front and held for nearly two laps until being overtaken by Vinson who won by a couple of lengths. Wilkins was third, Back fourth and Dodd fifth after a closely contested race.

Sailing conditions were ideal for the fourth and final race. The championship was won but all the next places were still to be decided. Jagers rounded just ahead at the first mark after a long planing reach from the start, closely followed by Back, Vinson, Thompson, Wilkins, and Dodd. After the first lap Vinson, Dodd, Wilkins, Back, Thompson, and Jagers were still contesting the lead with Windibank threatening from behind. The leading group was still close after an exciting surfing run and reach to the finish. Vinson first, Dodd second, Wilkins third, Jagers fourth by a nose over Back and Thompson.

Henry Jagers

Overall Results:

			Points	
1	657	Mark Wilkins	Chipstead	5
2	549	Martin Vinson	Littleton	6
3	314	Heidi Dodd	Littleton	9
4	95	Heather Back	Mudford	11
5	500	Henry Jagers	Staunton Harold	12
6	700	John Windibank	Chipstead	14
7	188	Simon Thompson	Crawley	16
8	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley	23
9	99	Paul Luttmann	Crawley	24
10	745	Nick Warren	Littleton	26
11	117	Michael Thompson	Crawley	27
12	303	Derek Coleman	Coney	30
13	585	Brian Herring	Winsford Flash	31
14	50	Diana Thompson	Crawley	39
15	658	Ros Stevenson	Winsford Flash	41
16	259	Barry Sandle	Crawley	42

Tidal Champion: **Mark Wilkins** **Chipstead**

First Lady: **Heidi Dodd** **Littleton**

First Veteran: **Robin Ballam** **Crawley**



Ros Stevenson at Brightlingsea

(Photo: Andrew Simmons)

● MERTHYR TYDFIL OPEN

The wind was generally from the south-west but variable with westerly gusts and heavy rain showers but the cloud became more broken as the day progressed.

In the first race everyone had a good start and with most helms making an effort to try to stay in clear wind it was difficult to judge who led towards the windward mark. But Phil Hossell (Evesham) rounded it first closely followed by Bob Presley (Cotswold) and Paul Govier (Merthyr Tydfil & Port Talbot). These positions were maintained to the end of the race. Other positions didn't change with the exception of a few capsizes on the first downwind leg due mainly to the gusty conditions.

After lunch the beat of the course was re-set as the wind had shifted a little more westerly. As the start time approached, the wind dropped to zero but filled in again just before the start and built gradually throughout the race. This time Paul Govier reached the windward mark first with Phil Hossell close behind. These positions were maintained while Mark Govier (Merthyr Tydfil) had a hard time keeping third place from Bob Presley.

For the final race the wind had returned but the gusts seemed more severe - maybe we were tiring. Phil Hossell rounded the windward mark first followed by Bob Presley, Mark Govier and Paul Govier. Bob was caught out by a gust on the downwind leg and allowed Mark Govier and Malcolm Gingell (Chippenham) past. Paul was dropping back due to a failure of his kicking strap jammer. Phil finished first and, despite a capsize in a 'vortex' just before the finish line, Mark finished second with Bob, who had fought his way back past Malcolm, only a few seconds behind.

Overall Results:

1	650	PhilHossell	Evesham
2	419	Paul Govier	Merthyr Tydfil
3=	460	Mark Govier	Merthyr Tydfil
3=	25	Bob Presley	Cotswold
5	183	Malcolm Gingell	Chippenham
6	205	Alun Hughes	Merthyr Tydfil
7	715	Tony Evans	Llandegfedd
8	420	Rhian Bevan	Merthyr Tydfil
9	641	Paul Hinde	Middle Nene

Mark Govier

COMBS OPEN

Saturday 4th July dawned cold, grey, and miserable at Combs S. C., hardly welcoming to the eleven Comet sailors who attended the 1998 Comet Open meeting. The consolation was, however, a stiff breeze with just enough strength in some of the gusts to get the boats planing, and to make life interesting downwind.

The first race was dominated throughout by Peter Hayes (Redesmere), closely followed by Paul Hinde (Middle Nene) and Brian Herring (Winsford Flash). Unfortunately, a dramatic downwind capsize on the last lap lost Paul six places, letting Brian through into second. Steve Heyes (Redesmere), who had been chasing hard, was only beaten by inches into third.

The weather really did seem cold after a substantial lunch of chilli con carne in a warm, steamy clubhouse - perhaps that was why Peter Hayes made a poor start (for him!) to the second race, and was headed by Brian Herring and Roy Bradshaw (Redesmere) at the end of the first lap. However, a lull in the hitherto brisk wind enabled the chasing pack to close up in the second lap, and Peter managed to take the lead again. His second victory, ahead of Brian and Roy, ensured that he retained the overall winner's prize that he won in 1997.

The rain had held off all day, and the sun was even trying to shine as we started the final race. This (without Peter!) was a closely fought affair, with the wind gusting at perhaps its strongest so far. The whole pack stayed very close together for the first lap, until the long beat sorted them out a bit and Steve Heyes emerged as clear leader. Ros Stevenson was unluckily a late casualty when she was given a nasty crack by the boom at the very last mark (but she still finished - you can't keep a Comet sailor down!). Paul Hinde fought back excellently from eighth place to finally take second, ahead of Sue Pollard (Combs) in third. Steve's victory gained him the overall second prize, with Brian Herring taking the third-place trophy.

The full results were:

1	670	Peter Hayes	Redesmere
2	331	Steve Heyes	Redesmere
3	585	Brian Herring	Winsford Flash
4	641	Paul Hinde	Middle Nene
5.	222	Roy Bradshaw	Redesmere
6	235	Sue Pollard	Combs

Sue Pollard

● STAUNTON HAROLD OPEN

Twelve Comets entered the Staunton Harold open meeting on Saturday 11th July, the day before the French beat Brazil in the World Cup. The forecast for the weekend was wind, gales and more wind.

The first race got under way in a force 3 - 4 with plenty of tactical discussion on how to outmanoeuvre the other helms and get to the front of the fleet - needless to say I never managed it. Two helms, Peter Hayes and Chris Robinson sailed an excellent race to finish in that order with Phil Hossell third.

Race 2 started in a force 4 and each time we arrived on the long broad reach the wind seemed to increase with some of us definitely being out of control. I did not think Comets could go so fast and still be sailing upright, it was so invigorating (what a nice way to describe fear!). The race positions at the end of race 2 were the same as in race 1.

At the start of race 3 only 6 helms took to the water, the rest having had enough excitement for one day and content to watch us fight the last race out for positions. The race started in force 3 - 4 but died away to almost nothing in the last lap with great relief for me and I suspect some of the others. Our friend Henry could only manage one race, I wonder why? - you will have to ask him next time you meet.

After a very enjoyable day's sailing the overall positions were:

1	670	Peter Hayes	Redesmere
2	63	Chris Robinson	Tamworth
3	650	Phil Hossell	Evesham
4	532	John Coppenhall	Hunts
5	619	John Orchard	Staunton Harold
6	643	Keith Appleby	Carsington
1 st lady:	601	P. Moore	Staunton Harold

John Orchard

HAMPTON PIER OPEN

A rather disappointing nine Comets entered for the Hampton Pier Open Meeting on one of the best days of the summer.

There was very little wind as Race 1 started. but it gradually increased, although it also veered changing reaches into runs or beats. All boats reached the start line at more less the right time and they were away with one individual recall. Some aggressive jockeying for position enabled Paul Luttmann to slip round the windward mark while the rest were otherwise engaged. The next leg was a dead run with a strong cross tide. Paul took the best line and rounded first although other boats were faster, and so into a beat against the tide. Annette Walter tacked early and virtually made the windward mark in one tack, with the rest of the fleet well to leeward. At the next mark she appeared to have some difficulty, enabling Paul to close the gap but both boats then started to sail towards the wrong mark! Emer Power, with the courage of her convictions, stole the lead. The course was shortened and Emer won followed by Annette and Paul.

With a new course for Race 2, an ebbing tide and a wind that had picked up to force 3, sailing conditions were perfect. Chris Robinson was first to the windward mark and despite some confusion with the tide direction on the following broad reach, learned from experience and at the next mark tacked quickly into the favourable tide building up an increasing lead to finish two minutes ahead of Phillip Hossell, who had also maintained the second slot throughout, with Paul a close third.

In Race 3 John Windibank, who tacked across the front the fleet to clear his wind, was first to the windward mark. The broad reach that followed produced a leading pack that was bunched together and this enabled following boats to catch up. Phil Hossell was first to the next mark with John in second place. They continued in this order until the finish, although on the final run John pulled out all the stops but failed by some 5 ft. to gain an inside overlap on the penultimate mark. Chris Robinson was third despite strong competition from Annette Walter and Paul Luttmann.

The overall results were:

1	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham
2	63	Chris Robinson	Tamworth
3	700	John Windibank	Chipstead
4	323	Annette Walter	Welwyn
5	99	Paul Luttmann	Crawley
6	62	Emer Power	Chipstead

John Finch (Comet 325, Hampton Pier Y.C.)

MUDEFORD OPEN

Eighteen visitors joined five home Comets for the Mudeford Open meeting.

The first race was sailed in force 3 to 4 winds and an ebbing tide. The fleet split on the first beat against the tide, some going left and the rest to the right. Paul Luttmann rounded the windward mark first followed by Robin Ballam but they went in the wrong direction to the next mark allowing John Challenger to take the lead. On the second beat Glynn Jung used his local knowledge and split from the fleet going far right to avoid the tide and moved up from 4th to 2nd. Finishing positions were John 1st, Glynn 2nd, Paul 3rd.

Race 2 was a long difficult course around the harbour, crossing two tidal currents, the main channel traffic and passing through lines of moored boats. Nick Warren secured a comfortable 2nd place behind John Challenger, with Robin Ballam 3rd.

The wind increased to force 5 for the third race and only 10 boats made it to the start line. Ann Hooper had a good start and held 3rd place until she capsized allowing Glynn Jung through to 3rd which he held until the finish despite pressure from Derek Coleman in 4th. Paul Luttmann had a comfortable 2nd place behind John Challenger. There were many capsizes and one retirement.

Overall positions:

				Points
1	159	John Challenger	Mudeford	2
2	99	Paul Luttmann	Crawley	5
3	554	Glynn Jung	Mudeford	5
4	745	Nick Warren	Littleton	7
5	518	Robin Ballam	Crawley	8
6	303	Derek Coleman	Coney	12

John Challenger

NASEBY OPEN



Close racing at Naseby



Henry Jagers Ros Stevenson Tony Best Brian Herring

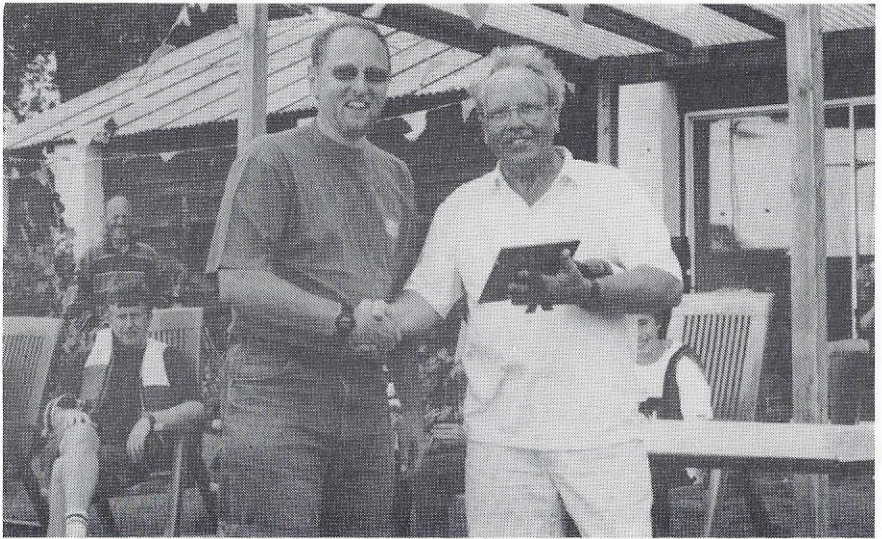
Prizewinners

(Photos: Liz Hossell)

AYLESBURY OPEN



Tony Best leading the fleet



Meeting winner Phil Hossell (on the left)

EDITOR'S NOTES

Many thanks to the contributors this time, particularly our Chairman and Secretary, who have contributed three pages, and those who have written meeting reports, particularly well-written I would like to say. Also, and this should go in every time, a special thank-you to Liz and Phil Hossell. They produce immaculate meeting results for me and Liz has made up, in photographs, for some of the missing open meeting reports. (If you want a report in Perihelion it is not enough to send it to Yachts & Yachting, I don't take that journal, send it also to me).

Anne and I have been talking to Robert Hamilton this time, and I think you will find what he has to say interesting. He, like some others I've interviewed, made some remarks on the difficulty of learning to sail a Comet and makes me wonder if novices need not so much a club as a more stable boat to learn on! I'm not suggesting outriggers, a carbon fibre mast or a dagger board made of lead, but perhaps something like an optional, removable, 5 gallon water tank on the floor, a smaller rudder or a porous sail.

The "Customizing your Comet" series I have not had any more ideas from members so for some items I am taking them from earlier issues of Perihelion.

What can I suggest for contributions next time ? Experiences with the Hyde sails seems to be a current issue under discussion, and Perihelion can be a forum for that.

Alan Browning, Editor

● CUSTOMIZING YOUR COMET -PART 4

Here are some more ideas for making your Comet suit you better. Some of them this time are from early issues of the newsletter.

Sometimes it is necessary to refer to other issues of Perihelion. This is done by, for example, "PH44, page 7, item 1".

As before, each modification or idea is given a code letter::

A: Definitely within class rules

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

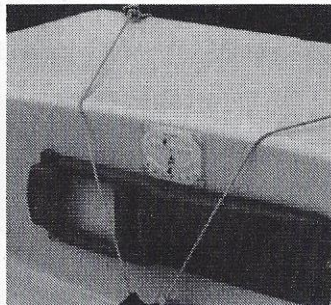
R: Out of class, but can be removed for racing

Y: Believed to be out of class

Z; Definitely out of class.

Inclinometer (item 36, code A)

In 1993 I attached, with sticky fixers, a Silva inclinometer to the rear cockpit wall of my Comet (361). Most of the time it is not obscured by the tiller. (see photo). I discussed this with Barry Hylton who was considering including inclinometers as an option on the accessories list, but I believe he had in mind to place it on the front wall of the cockpit. I tried this but it seemed to be obscured more, especially when the dagger board was up.



Ropes to assist climbing in after capsize (item 37, code B)

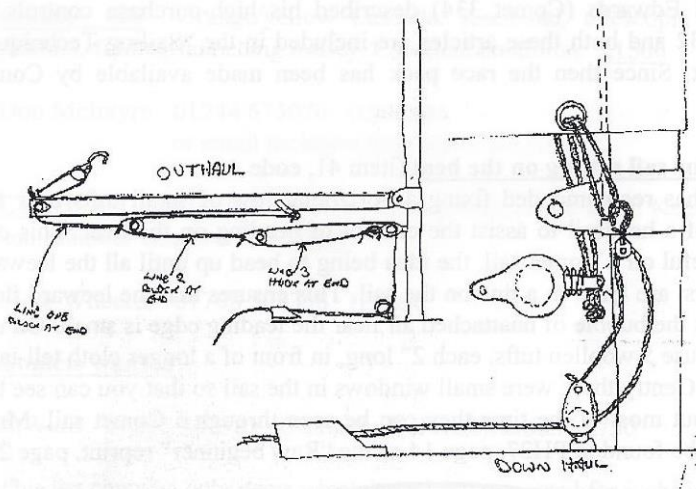
John Finch (Comet 325) mentions, in an article in PH12, page 5, difficulty in climbing in after a capsize and made the modification of "tying a rope on each side between the mast and the fixtures at each end of the rope horse".

Hitching the outhaul rope to the mast with a snap shackle (item 31, code A)

8:1 Outhaul (item 32, code A)

Avoiding hitching the downhaul rope to the boom (item 33, code A)

These items, on Brian Welham's boat, were described in PH46, page 12 but the upper photograph on that page may not have been clear enough to explain them properly. Brian has drawn two diagrams which I hope will make the system crystal clear for you:



Long outhaul rope to avoid sail flogging at launch (item 38, code A)

Roger Johnstone (Comet 696) wrote, in PH18, page 6, that if you launch with the sail furled round the mast, you can have difficulty hooking the clew fittings to a flapping sail. With a very long outhaul rope (8ft longer than standard) the sail can be bunched at the mast while attached fully at the clew, and tied with a light line and slip knot around the mast and sail. After launch the line can be released and the outhaul rope pulled to move the clew right along the boom. The article goes into some detail. I have found that the bunch of sail tends to oscillate side to side in stronger winds but this might be avoided by judicious choice of where on the mast the line is tied. If a purchase of more than 4:1 is used, the outhaul rope will need to be correspondingly longer.

Shock cord to hold the boom out on a run (item 39, code R)

I believe it was Errol Edwards (Comet 334) who tried using a length of shock cord tied between the bow fitting and the fitting at the end of the boom, to help hold the boom out on a run. This is used on other classes, eg Solo, OK. He liked it and did I believe propose it at an AGM (1991?) It had the support of the members but was rejected by Andrew Simmons and is therefore considered to be out of class. I have been unable to find reference to this in my Perihelions, but, outside racing, members might find it useful.

Increasing control line purchases (item 40, code A)

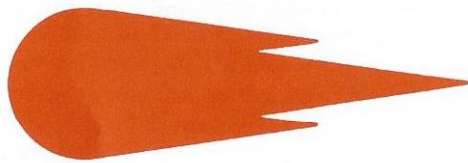
Complete freedom is allowed in the Comet rules for modifying the purchase of the controls. Errol Edwards (Comet 334) described his high-purchase controls in PH19 and PH32 and both these articles are included in the "Sailing Technique" reprint booklet. Since then the race pack has been made available by Comet Dinghies.

Gentry tufts for sail setting on the beat (item 41, code A)

Arvel Gentry has recommended fixing a horizontal row of small tufts near the leading edge of a headsail to assist the control of heading on the beat. This can possibly be useful on a Comet sail, the idea being to head up until all the leeward tufts bar the first are lying in a line on the sail. This ensures that the leeward flow is attached but the bubble of unattached air near the leading edge is small. On my Comet (361) I use 5 woollen tufts, each 2" long, in front of a longer cloth tell-tale. When used by Gentry there were small windows in the sail so that you can see the leeward tufts but most of the time they can be seen through a Comet sail. More comments can be found in PH27, page 14 or the "Raw beginner" reprint, page 20.



The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in December 1998. **Contributions to me by Wednesday 25th November please.** I am sorry that this is a few days earlier than usual but it is well away from the last two meetings of the season. The reason for the change is to avoid a repetition of what happened last year. I had to delay completing the editing to consult the Committee over the quorum issue and this was embarrassing to me. Because, in addition to the usual preparations for Christmas, finishing the newsletter coincided with three orchestral concerts, for two of which I was publicity officer (producing and distributing posters, mailing list, banner, programmes, tickets as well as the rehearsals and the concerts themselves). Anne understandably said "never again"!



Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association