

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 49
WINTER 1998/99

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Front cover:

Comet 650, an eventful year sailing by itself
and with Phil Hossell (see article on page 14)

(Photo: Liz Hossell)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The end of the year approaches and like everyone else I find myself taking stock of how the year has gone. And, yes, its official: 1998 has been our most successful season yet for Comet class open meetings!

At the start of the year we thought we could have too many meetings on offer and entries might be thinly spread. Well it would appear our fears were unfounded as all events had enough competitors to make them worthwhile, the attendance at some was very good indeed, and overall records were broken. I would like to think that the spread of venues encouraged more newcomers to try our events and we did indeed see more new faces on the circuit. Let's hope we see them again and many others joining the regulars at next year's meetings. You will find facts and figures in Phillip Hossell's report later on or in the November 13th issue of Yachts and Yachting

Many thanks to Phillip for once again collecting and collating the results and to Liz for organising all the series prizes. Also very well done, Phil, for winning most of them this year!

I have myself done a considerable amount of travelling this year. Indeed, I only realised a few days ago just how many events I have been to: 16 including our two excellent and memorable championship meetings. I can only say how enjoyable I found each and every one of them, yes even the ones I did especially badly in. Our sincere thanks to all the clubs and people who ran or helped organise the events and thanks to all the competitors who took part.

In my previous report I wrote that Norah and I were engaged on a recruitment drive. I am pleased to say that our combined efforts continue to bear fruit and the Association already has about 25 more members as a result. The exercise has also flushed out about 20 boats for the second hand market which, whilst it may not please Andrew Simmons in the short term, can only be of benefit to the vitality of the Class as a whole. You will find your membership renewal form later in this issue, can I ask you to attend to it promptly, please? This will save the committee, especially Derek, a lot of work and give us all more time to organise events, promote Comet sailing nationally, and hopefully go sailing ourselves!

There are many among you, I know, who are not keen on racing. Indeed we have members at my own club who have never raced but very much enjoy cruising their Comets, and not just on warm summer afternoons. On the other hand, if you

fancy a try at racing, and even our top helms had to start somewhere, don't be shy of having a go, even of coming to the open meetings. You bring your own level of competitiveness and ability (which will improve) to each race and you might be very pleasantly surprised to find what an enjoyable day out an open meeting can be: and what a friendly and helpful bunch most of the other competitors are! However, we would like to be able to offer more to our cruising members and would be pleased to hear any ideas you have on the subject. Contact me directly or write something for Alan to publish in Perihelion.

Whilst on the subject of Perihelion, I'm sure we are all delighted and sometimes surprised by what some of our members send in. I know Alan very much welcomes and depends on your contributions so do keep them coming. One of the Association's activities which seems to have gone unreported so far this year, was our entry in the Draycote Silver Salvors event last March. This is an invitation only event for established dinghy classes and we were asked to send four Comets. After some arm twisting we persuaded Heidi Dodd, Heather Back, Chris Robinson, and David Forsdike to represent us and I should like to thank them all for taking part. The race is run as a 200 minute pursuit and is quite a gruelling event as I can vouch for myself having done it twice in years gone by. It is also a large event, about 165 starters this year, with all the atmosphere which that provides. Well I'm afraid the conditions did not favour the Comet this time and many, let's not be coy, most, of the larger faster dinghies soon overtook us but at least we were there. Thanks again to our sailors and I hope they got some enjoyment from competing in such a prestigious event.

I am pleased to announce our return to Hampton Pier next summer for the 1999 National Championships and I will be especially pleased to welcome you all again to my own club, Staunton Harold, for the Association Championships at the start of May. I promise there will be no karaoke!

The sailing may be over for some of you for a month or two, but the winter months are a busy time for your Committee. We have exhibitions and other advertising to attend to and the final touches to make to the 1999 programme. I am myself very much involved with the West Midlands RYA Boat Show Committee which organises the whole of the RYA area at the Boat Caravan and Leisure Show at the NEC. As usual, the Comet Association will be well represented but we will need your help to man our stand throughout the show (20-28th February). If you can spare us half a day in return for free tickets and a chance to talk Comets and sailing then please give Phillip Hossell a ring before he rings you. I'm sure those of you who have helped in the past will vouch for how enjoyable a day out this can be! Before that there will be the Earls Court Boat Show - see you there at the Comet Dinghies stand? And immediately after there

is Sailboat 99 at Alexandra Palace, I expect we will be looking for some help with that too!

A very happy Christmas and prosperous New Year to you all, Good Sailing,

Henry Jagers, Chairman

1998 APHELION AND ORBITAL REVIEW

1998 was a brilliant year for the Comet Class Association. More later, but first of all, let's have a look at the condemned folk of 1998. That is those who I predicted would have a good year in 1998. It is rather like the "death wish" put on them. You know the situation when Murray Walker states the obvious on the last lap of a Grand Prix, ".....and Damon Hill can do no wrong and collect 10 points for this race." What happens ? Damon Hill crashes out with yards to go and gets nil points. That's the way some of my top tips went this season whilst others did not qualify. Who were those condemned ones ? To save you looking back for my article in Perihelion No 46 I will now name them.

Heather Back only competed in 2 events (Nationals & Association). Heidi Dodd did not disappoint and gave everybody a good run, especially on home soil at Littleton where she beat many of the top men. John Challenger only managed 1 event (Mudeford) which he duly won, as did Steve Cook (winning Hillhead). Robert Hamilton likewise won his home event at Taplow Lake but otherwise only competed in the Nationals.

John Edwards had a difficult season having to overcome an illness in mid-season but still managed to qualify for the Northern Aphelion. Well-done John, and we hope to see you on the water for many years to come. Henry had a good season after his appendix removal wrecked the end of his 1997 season. Derek Coleman and Robin Ballam had pretty good seasons and I recall them not 'locking horns' so much this year.

That's a few of the 'oldies', now what about some of the younger ones. Chris Robinson had a good year, especially when it blew. Good luck with the new job Chris and hope it does not prevent you sailing next year. Simon Thompson again showed good consistency but perhaps a few victories next year would help. Paul Hinde had some better results than in 1997. Well done Paul, but just make sure you don't have too many late nights and keep up the studying.

Jake Sutton went unbeaten in 1998. Unfortunately he only managed 4 meetings. Alex Reeve fell short of qualifying but still showed us his talent. Good luck with the RS300, but we still hope you can make some of the Comet meetings. Len Dean had some great results in the light airs, but found it harder work when it blew. That just leaves the Wilkins boys. Mark just qualified for the Orbital (only in 2nd place) whilst Guy must be either rewriting his book on Mirror sailing or watching too much of Charlton Athletic as we only saw him twice.

A special mention must now go to Brian Welham. He is now going to be the top tip for 1999. At the Sutton Bingham Open Meeting in early May (whilst it was blowing your socks off as usual), we were running down to the start when Brian asked me why he had not been tipped for the top? Whilst both of us were very close to capsizing I explained to him that he should have a good season this year as nobody will be watching out for him. What happened Brian? So watch out everyone, Brian is going to be the man to watch in 1999!

That's gone through all the tit-bits for the year. What actually happened you may ask. On the statistics front the total number of competitors that entered the 1998 events was 501 (an increase of 66 over 1997). The average per event was marginally down at 19.3 but there were 4 more meetings. Who clocked up the most mileage? Me, competing in 17 events, closely followed by Henry with 16, with Chris Robinson & Derek Coleman attending 14 each. Crawley Mariners were represented by Robin Ballam & Paul Luttmann with 13, Paul Hinde (driving himself sometimes now), Ros Stevenson & Brian Herring all achieved 12 and newcomer Nick Warren made it to 11 events. Highest attendance went to Littleton again (38), followed by Kingsmead and Chipstead with 29 apiece,

Qualification for the Area Aphelions was a little more difficult as there were six events in each area with the best four results counting. Even though, three of the four areas equalled 1997's figures with a slight decrease in the other area. However, the number of qualifiers for the Orbital was at a record level.

Eastern Aphelion

Five different winners were thrown up in this area. It kicked off with victories for Jake Sutton at Fishers Green and Mark Wilkins on home waters at Chipstead. Then we saw Tony Best battling it out with Henry to take the Naseby meeting. I then entered the fray by winning Aylesbury (with Tony 2nd), and Hampton Pier. By the last event at Littleton, Jake, Mark and Tony could not qualify, so it was left to Henry and me, with Paul Luttmann standing an outside chance. As those who were at Littleton will remember, we had 4 different season's weather in one day. The event was won by Heidi Dodd from Mark and Martin Vinson. Henry was 6th

Paul 8th and I was 9th, which was enough to give me the Aphelion ahead of Henry, with Paul 3rd and Nick Warren 4th. Well done to Annette Walter who had a 4th place at Hampton Pier and qualified in 7th place in the Aphelion. We think we shall see more of you nearer the front next year.

Western Aphelion

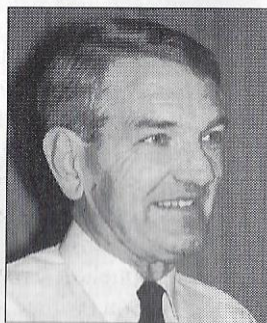
Jake kicked off this area with a victory at Shearwater. Then it was down to me with 3 consecutive successes at Sutton Bingham, Merthyr Tydfil and Cotswold. John Challenger made his only appearance to take Mudeford. Finally, at Chew Valley Lake, as there were only going to be four qualifiers, I had to come above 9th. It was such a warm late September day that the lack of wind prevented any sailing until after 1.30pm. Three quick races took place, and I managed to secure 2nd place behind Henry (who did not qualify) with Derek Coleman in 3rd. The Area winner was me followed by Derek, with Bob Presley 3rd and Mark Govier 4th.

Northern Aphelion

Divine intervention supposedly came to the help of Ros Stevenson, Paul Hinde and me at the opening meeting at Chester. Whilst racing we noticed that we were being filmed, but had no idea why. Several weeks later, Ros established that it was for Songs of Praise. When I eventually saw the video, you could see that our movements in the boat were in perfect harmony to the hymns that were being sung. Anyway, back to the sailing. I won Chester as well as Arden. Henry took Glossop and had a 2nd at Chester, whilst Peter Hayes won Combs and Staunton Harold, with a 2nd at Glossop. All down to the final event at Redesmere where Peter Hayes and I were level. On the day, Peter had his poorest result of the year, so I managed to take my 3rd Aphelion of 1998. Peter was 2nd followed by Henry in 3rd and Steve Heyes in 4th in an area that produced 9 qualifiers.

Southern Aphelion

Six different winners here, but unfortunately none of them qualified. They were, Alex Reeve (Crawley Mariners), Jake Sutton (Frensham Pond), Robert Hamilton (Taplow Lake), Steve Cook (Hillhead), Len Dean (Pingewood) and Mark Wilkins (Kingsmead). So who were the contenders for the area? Fifty five different members entered this area (another new record), and it looked like any one of them could take the Trophy. Up to the final meeting at Kingsmead, consistent performances had been returned by Heidi Dodd, Martin Vinson, Richard Smallwood and Simon



Richard Smallwood

Thompson. All four were potential winners, trying to get their name on the Trophy for the first time, so the lack of wind at Kingsmead SC provided a difficult challenge. Richard managed to come up with the goods on the day by taking 3rd place at the event, and to his great surprise he just pipped Heidi to the Area Trophy with Simon taking 3rd and Martin 4th . There were 12 qualifiers.

Orbital

I secured the Orbital Trophy well before the last few Open Meetings having won 8 events. There was a record 25 helms who qualified for the Orbital award, probably helped by the record equalling entry (51) at the National Championships. The next few places were not certain by any means, even going into the last event. Henry looked favourite for the runners-up spot, hotly pursued by Heidi, Martin and Chris Robinson. The tables were turned upside down when Mark Wilkins won



Henry Jagers presenting the Orbital Trophy Certificate to Phil Hossell

the final event to pip Henry for 2nd place overall. You can never write off Mark can you ? He has won everything in Comets many times over except the National Championships - maybe next year Mark ! It was good to see Henry back to his old form to take 3rd overall. Chris had built up a consistent set of results throughout the year to take 4th spot ahead of the pair to watch for 1999, Martin (5th) and Heidi (6th). Pleasing to see was that there were 6 ladies amongst the qualifiers with Heidi giving the men a run, especially after her victory in the best attended meeting at Littleton.

Derek Coleman came in a good 7th, even though we have some wonderful photographic evidence of him trying yet again to sail with the boat above him at Taplow Lake. Simon Thompson, who will do better I'm sure, was 8th followed in 9th by (yes the hot tip for 1999) Bran Welham. John Windibank took 10th spot just ahead of Paul Luttmann (11th) who showed an improved performance over his 1997 results especially with his 2nd at Mudeford. It was pleasing to see Richard Smallwood (12th) making a return to the action, especially with him taking the Southern Aphelion Trophy. I understand that Richard is making yet another house move this winter. Please stop moving Richard and concentrate on giving us some good racing in 1999.

The next five places were all filled by heavy travellers as they covered 60 meetings between them. Brian Herring (13th), Paul Hinde (14th), Nick Warren (15th), Robin Ballam (16th) and Ros Stevenson (17th) filled these slots.

Welcome to the fold Nick, and it was good to see you enjoying your first season in Comets. I shall now put the curse on you by believing that you will have an even better season next year. Len Dean (18th) will be hoping for more lighter airs next year, and Michael Thompson (19th) will I'm sure be a little disappointed with his overall position. Tony Best (20th) produced some of his best sailing to win the Naseby meeting and he was runner up at Aylesbury. Unfortunately, Tony had two disappointing results that dropped him down the rankings. I won't tip you Tony so that you can give Brian Welham some good competition next year.

Annette Walter (21st) showed us at times what she is capable of, especially in those lighter airs. Barry Sandle popped up in 22nd slot closely followed by a trio of our evergreen ladies, Anne Hooper (23rd), Diana Thompson (24th) and Fiona Cauter (25th).

Crawley Mariners was again the best represented club in the Orbital with six qualifiers, followed by Littleton and Chipstead with three apiece. Well done to Brian Herring and Ros Stevenson who travelled to several meetings in the southern half of the country. This was an excellent achievement considering that their home club is Winsford Flash in Cheshire and that they both also competed in many National 12 Open Meetings. That's some mileage that they covered.

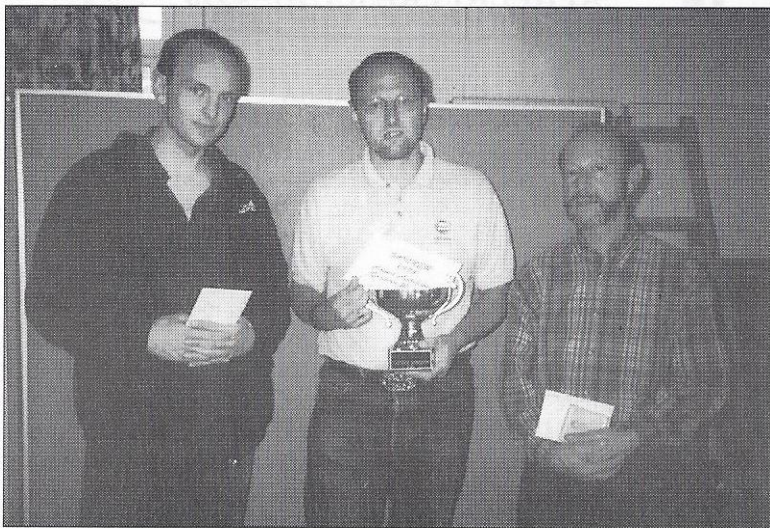
By the time you read this you will probably be preparing stuff yourselves on turkey etc and then be thinking about slimming down again for the 1999 season. I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year and hope that the Comet Class Association carries on going from strength to strength during 1999 and beyond.

I look forward to seeing you either at Sailboat '99 in March or on the water throughout the year.

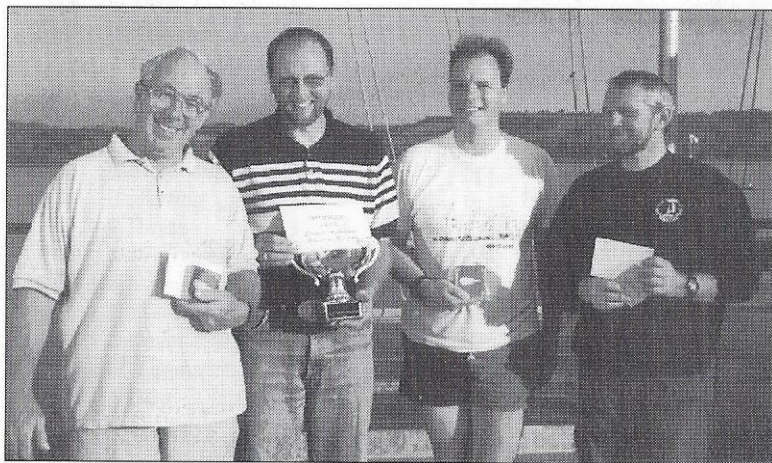
Phillip Hossell (Comet 650, Evesham SC)

Editor's notes: Here is perhaps the place to remark that my next two "Talking to . . ." articles will be devoted to some of the most successful sailors of 1998: Heidi Dodd and her partner Martin Vincent (issue 50) and Phillip Hossell (issue 51).

And, someone has to say it: "I Think Phil Hossell will do very well in 1999".



Top three in the Eastern Aphelion: Paul Luttman, Phil Hossell, Henry Jagers



The four qualifiers in the Western Aphelion: Derek Coleman,
Phil Hossell, Mark Govier and Bob Presley.

APHELION RESULTS - 1998

SOUTHERN AREA

			CRW	FRN	TAP	HIL	PIN	KMD	Pts
1	565	R Smallwood		2	5	5	7	3	15
2	314	H Dodd	3	5		3		6	17
3	188	S Thompson	4		3		3	9	19
4	549	M Vinson	7	3		2		12	24
5	99	P Luttmann	10		6	4	8	11	28
6	518	R Ballam	9	8	12		4	7	28
7	707	D Coleman	2	7	15		10	15	34
8	63	C Robinson		4	7		15	16	42
9	745	N Warren		14		5	9	14	42
10	117	M Thompson	11		16	5	13	20	45
11	43	A Hooper		11	17	5		21	54
12	50	D Thompson	21		18		16	24	79

EASTERN AREA

			FGR	CHP	NAS	AYL	HMP	LIT	Pts
1	650	P Hossell			5	1	1	9	16
2	500	H Jagers	4		2	7		6	19
3	99	P Luttmann	7	11		6	5	8	26
4	745	N Warren	11		6	4	7		28
5	63	C Robinson		9		5	2	14	30
6	518	R Ballam	10	6		12		10	38
7	323	A Walter	16	18		13	4	18	51

WESTERN AREA

			SHR	SBG	MRT	COT	MUD	CHV	Pts
1	650	P Hossell		1	1	1		2	5
2	707	D Coleman		2		4	6	3	15
3	25	R Presley	7	6	3	5		5	19
4	460	M Govier	8	3	3	6		8	20

NORTHERN AREA

		CHS	GLS	CMB	SHR	ARD	RDS	Pts
1	650 P Hossell	1	3		3	1	1	6
2	670 P Hayes	4	2	1	1	6	6	8
3	500 H Jagers	2	1		10		2	15
4	331 S Heyes	3	4	2			9	18
5	641 P Hinde	5	8	4	9	3	11	20
6	585 B Herring	9	6	3	7	7	8	23
7	633 J Edwards	6		9		13	5	33
8	658 R Stevenson	10	5	8	11	15	10	33
9	643 K Appleby	8		7	6		12	33

ORBITAL RESULTS - 1998

									Assoc.	Nats	Mtgs	Points
1	650 P Hossell	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		17	17	6
2	657 M Wilkins	1	1	1	2	2	3	1	3	7	10	10
3	500 H Jagers	1	1	2	2	2	4	5	5	16	12	12
4	63 C Robinson	2	2	2	2	4	5		26	14	17	17
5	549 M Vinson	2	2	2	3	3	6	2	13	9	18	18
6	314 H Dodd	1	3	3	3	5	5	3	8	9	20	20
7	707 D Coleman	2	2	3	4	5	6	12	16	14	22	22
8	188 S Thompson	3	3	3	4	4	7	7	7	9	24	24
9	711 B Welham	3	4	5	5	5	6		6	8	28	28
10	700 J Windibank	2	3	4	6	6	9	6	11	8	30	30
11	99 P Luttmann	2	4	5	6	6	7	9	33	13	30	30
12	565 R Smallwood	2	3	5	5	7	9		9	6	31	31
13	585 B Herring	3	3	5	6	7	7	13		12	31	31
14	641 P Hinde	3	4	4	5	7	8		32	12	31	31
15	745 N Warren	4	4	5	6	7	9	10	15	11	35	35
16	518 R Ballam	4	5	6	7	7	8	8	23	13	37	37
17	658 R Stevenson	5	7	8	9	10	10	15		12	49	49
18	626 L Dean	1	2	8	8	17	21		21	6	57	57
19	117 M Thompson	5	11	11	11	13	13	11	18	9	64	64
20	625 A Best	1	2	11	18	24	25		25	6	81	81
21	323 A Walter	4	13	14	16	17	18		30	8	82	82
22	259 B Sandle	12	15	16	16	19	20	16		7	98	98
23	43 A Hooper	5	7	11	17	21	40		40	6	101	101
24	50 D Thompson	14	16	17	18	21	21	14	46	8	107	107
25	575 F Cauter	13	14	19	19	22	41		41	6	128	128

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

NORTHERN AREA

Arden

- 1 650 P Hossell
- 2 63 C Robinson
- 3 641 P Hinde
- 4 675 M Squirrel
- 5 724 R Duncan
- 6 670 P Hayes

SOUTHERN AREA

Pingewood

- 1 626 L Dean
- 2 700 J Windibank
- 3 188 S Thompson
- 4 518 R Ballam
- 5 711 B Welham
- 6 500 H Jagers

WESTERN AREA

Mudford

- 1 159 J Challener
- 2 99 P Luttmann
- 3 554 G Jung
- 4 745 N Warren
- 5 518 R Ballam
- 6 707 D Coleman

Redesmere

- 1 650 P Hossell
- 2 500 H Jagers
- 3 374 J Thompson
- 4 648 B Hamilton
- 5 633 J Edwards
- 6 670 P Hayes

Kngsmead

- 1 657 M Wilkins
- 2 626 L Dean
- 3 565 R Smallwood
- 4 318 N Price
- 5 711 B Welham
- 6 314 H Dodd

Chew Valley

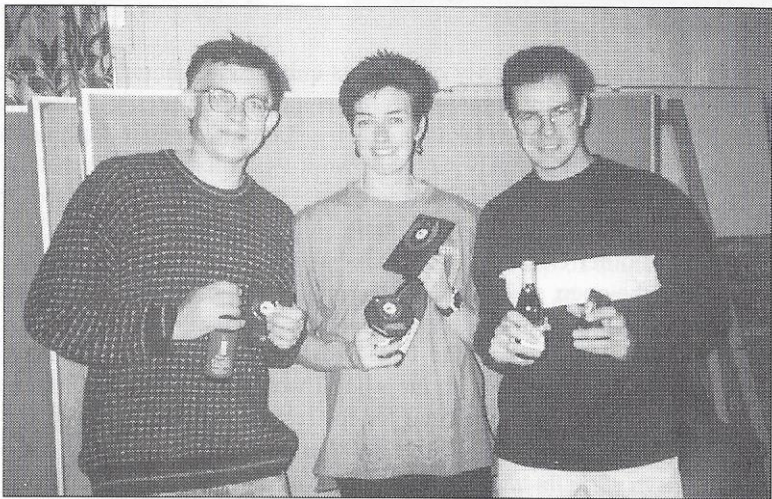
- 1 500 H Jagers
- 2 650 P Hossell
- 3 707 D Coleman
- 4 585 B Herring
- 5 25 R Presley
- 6 424 P Vere

EASTERN AREA

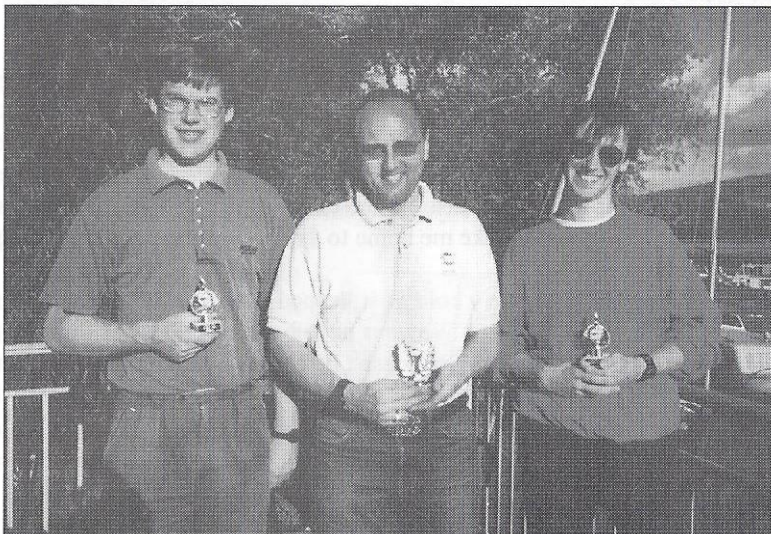
Littleton

- 1 314 H Dodd
- 2 657 M Wilkins
- 3 549 M Vinson
- 4 188 S Thompson
- 5 707 D Coleman
- 6 500 H Jagers

● SOME NEW NAMES AT THE TOP



Winners At Littleton: Mark Wilkins, Heidi Dodd, Martin Vinson



Winners at Arden: Chris Robinson, Phil Hossell, Paul Hinde

COMET 650 - THIS IS YOUR LIFE

I was born on 21 May 1994. My owner was quite excited about me on the day I was delivered. All he wanted to do was to get me on the water and start working me straight away. He used to take me down sailing at Evesham Sailing Club on the narrow River Avon - which was hard work with all that tacking etc. There was only one other Comet to talk to (there are 4 of us now). Some weekends he would take me on a long journey to some strange sailing clubs but there were always plenty of other Comets to keep me entertained. It was rare that he would leave me out in the open, so I spent most of my time all cosy in his big garage.

That was my routine throughout the 1994 and 1995 seasons. Then in June 1996, my owner was highly chuffed with me when I won him his first open meeting at Chester. It then went back to normal for the rest of the year and also for 1997. Things then changed quite considerably at the end of 1997.

As my boss had worked me hard for the last 4 years, he decided I needed to smarten up my act. Well, I had put in something in excess of 100 races a year. He packed me off to Barrie Hylton at Dinghy Leisure for a winter refurbishment and to smarten up my already good looks. Barrie looked after me during that winter and really made me look something special.

In early March 1998 my boss came to collect me and was very pleased with the way I looked. He was even more impressed when I won him both club races on my first appearance of 1998. Then he did something very strange. He left me down at the sailing club for the first time in a couple of years. He did tie the spars onto my deck, cover me up and also tie me to the fence. I think he was just lazy and could not be bothered to take me home to that nice warm and cosy garage.

For the next few days I got very cold as it heaped it down with rain for four days (well it was Easter coming up). "Why has he left me here?" I was thinking as the River Avon level was rising. "Why doesn't he come and take me back home?" I felt I was safe though because I was tied to the fence and one of my fellow Comets had his painter just thrown across the grass.

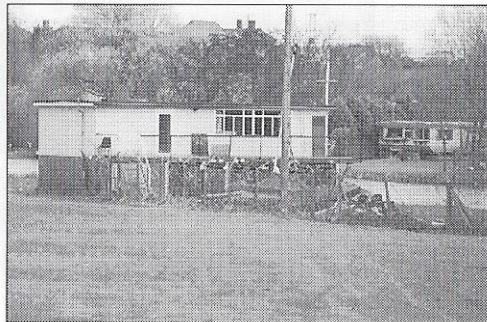
Then, in the early hours of Good Friday, the river burst its banks and suddenly I was hanging on for grim death. The flow of the river was phenomenal. It rose from nothing under me to in excess of 16 feet in less than a couple of hours. It didn't take long for me to be floating by the side of all these other boats. A couple of boats decided they



could not wait around, so they went off for a sail. My fellow Comet (the jammy devil), managed to get his painter to coil around the top of the fence as he floated upwards. I was hanging on with my bow tied down to a concrete post on the fence, but the water flow was pulling so much that my rope was starting to chafe through. Eventually, the rope gave way and I was off. That was the last I remember for three days.

My boss woke up on Good Friday morning and thought that he had better come down to see how I was doing. A bit too late I thought after the event. Apparently, he could not get near as the river had engulfed the Sailing Club, a large Caravan Park and many businesses, shops, pubs and hotels. I had been long gone when he came down. Just to show you how much he cared about me, he went on holiday from the Saturday to the Tuesday not knowing where I was. (in fairness, I suppose that there was nothing he could do at that stage until the waters subsided.)

Three days later I awoke. "Where is this strange place?" I thought. Apparently I was 2 miles down river, having been forced under 2 bridges, across tennis courts, football pitches and ended up by some public toilets under a bridge. I was badly hurt and ached from my experiences. My dear beloved launching trolley had gone, my outdoor coat (cover) was severely ripped and my gel coat skin was badly cut in many areas of both the hull and deck. "What do I look like now?" I have never felt so depressed in all of my 4 years of life.

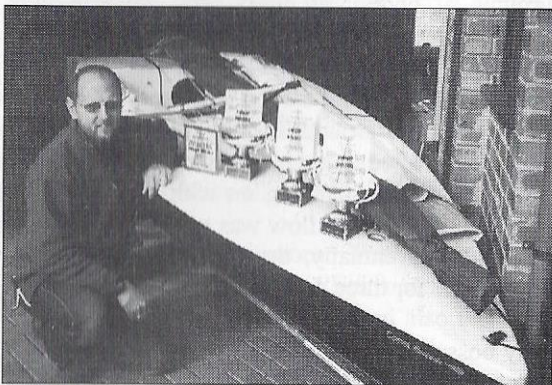


Eventually, as the waters subsided, somebody found my sad looking hull and took me back to the Sailing Club and dumped me on the mud on what used to be a lovely grass lawn.

There were other sad boats like me, wondering if we had a future. My boss then appeared and told me that I didn't look too bad and was glad that I was still around. I felt better already, and with that he rang up Barrie and the Insurance Company to arrange to smarten me up again. The next day I was in Barrie's workshop and he promised that I would be as good as new again.

A week later I was picked up by the boss, looking as good as ever again. He promised that he would take care of me this time in return for me working hard for him on the water this year. I said, 'It's a deal'. The boss has looked after me this year so I did my part by helping him win many club races, 8 open meetings,

the North, East & West Aphelion Trophies and the Orbital Trophy. I played my part didn't I!



Here is me with the four trophies my boss helped me to win.

I shall be on display at the NEC show in February and at Sailboat '99 in March so please come up to me, have a good look and just think how hard I was driven in 1998. It really was a truly dramatic, historic and immensely rewarding year in the end.

Comet 650 (with assistance from Phillip Hossell, Evesham SC)

PERIHELION

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in March 1999. Contributions to me by the end of February please.

Editor

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

1. You may have noticed more previously owned Comets for sale than is usual. Do not be alarmed! There is nothing sinister happening. The adverts are merely the response to a letter from your Committee asking owners to release boats which were not being sailed. We wrote to the 428 Comet owners who were not members of the Association, suggesting, amongst other things, that they might care to join us. The results have been way above our expectation. Apart from there being a number of boats becoming available to new helms, at least 37 owners have joined the Association. A warm welcome to you all.

2. One response to the Committee's letter to non-members came from a gentleman aged 70+ who wants to know if he is the only Comet sailor in that age range. So, if you admit, or boast, to being over threescore years and ten, please let us know. We have been considering revamping our 'veteran' qualification!

3. The Committee has recognised that asking helms to compete in 4 events to qualify for the Aphelions has stretched some people. We are hoping to introduce a fifth Aphelion next year, which will hopefully make areas smaller. We also plan to revert to results in 3 events to qualify.

4. A request has been made for the grid references for your club, so that it can be pinpointed more accurately on maps. Please send the information to the Newsletter Editor.

Norah Gould, Class Secretary



“Nagging Norah gives her helm a final word of advice.”

CHEW VALLEY OPEN

Comets from as far afield as Cheshire, Derbyshire and West Sussex gathered at Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club for the final round of the Western Aphelion Travellers Trophy on September 21st, 1998.

The morning's race had to be cancelled due to lack of wind but the afternoon saw a light but shifty easterly develop which enabled three races to be held.

Henry Jagers led the fleet for the first race and was closely followed by Errol Edwards. Phil Hossell took third place from Brian Herring on the final beat.

The second race saw Bob Presley lead Penny Vere at the first windward mark. Errol took over the lead on the second beat and held on to it to the finish. Henry took third place from Penny on the finish line.

Errol took the lead on the first beat of the final race and held it to the finish despite being challenged by Phil and Derek Coleman. Derek finished second and Phil third.

All competitors thoroughly enjoyed themselves thanks to the efforts of the race management team of Marcus Davies and Peter Sherwin. All competitors were each given a large trout caught that morning from the lake and very generously donated by Bristol Water PLC (see below).

Overall Results:

1	334	Errol Edwards	Chew Valley
2	500	Henry Jagers	Staunton Harold
3	650	Phillip Hossell	Evesham
4	707	Derek Coleman	Coney
5	585	Brian Herring	Winsford Flash
6	25	Bob Presley	Cotswold

Errol Edwards



Fisherfolk at Chew valley Lake! (they're all holding their trout).

NASEBY OPEN

Thanks to Liz Hossell for the pics - see Perihelion 48. The usual excuses about having had a busy summer with the family apply to me, I'm afraid, but having at last dug out my notes here is my report of Naseby's first Comet open meeting.

June 20th was warm and sunny in a summer which could at best be described as changeable. Nine visitors plus eight home boats made a fine spectacle and we were in for a day of close racing.

A steady Force 1-2 breeze for Race 1 gave George Parry of the home club a chance to show the way round the reservoir, only to be pipped at the finish by Henry Jagers. Brian Herring and Nick Warren filled 3rd and 4th places.

With the wind dying away to the merest breath for the start of Race 2, Brian was first away, but he hit the first mark when rounding in a bunch. Worse was to follow at the leeward mark where a huge ruck developed from which Tony Best emerged in the lead, closely covering Henry Jagers. In the confusion Mike Bevan (Naseby) moved his tiller the wrong way and fell out of the boat which then turned turtle! Did the chilli con carne provided at lunchtime have a hand in his misfortune?!!

The two leaders meanwhile battled it out to the end, finishing Tony 1st and Henry 2nd. Three home boats came next, Chris Weston creeping home in front of Tony Abbey at the favoured starboard end of the line closely followed by George Parry.

The wind filled in again for Race 3. Phil Hossell, having lost his touch somewhat by coming 14th in Race 2, now found clear air and made a dash for the front. None of the pursuing pack of seven boats was able to make any impression on his lead, which he held to the finish. Tony Best pulled up from 6th place at the last mark to finish 2nd, with Brian Herring also doing a brilliant piece of light airs sailing in a windshadow to slip into 3rd.

Henry Jagers had been poised to win the event after his first two results, but in Race 3 he was forced down to 7th place so he was tied with Tony Best on 2.75 points each from two races. However Tony had been 6th in Race 1 and so he beat Henry to win the event by one point on discards.

Chris Weston (Comet 211)

NEC LEISURE SHOW
20th-28th FEBRUARY 1999

Due to the success and publicity gained from previous NEC Leisure Shows, we (The Comet Class Association) have decided that we will take part in this event again in 1999.

I am therefore, calling upon all you volunteers out there to help man (& woman) our stand at the National Boat, Caravan & Leisure Show between Saturday 20th February & Sunday 28th February 1999.

The format for the show is as previous years. Over the 9 day period I will be looking for at least 36 volunteers. Yes, that is 4 people a day (2 each morning and 2 each afternoon). It is a great show for encouraging the young, the old and the in-between to sail, tell them of your experiences in the Comet, and hopefully, ultimately to buy a Comet (either new or second hand).

Lots of you folk out there have helped in the past, and I'm sure that having experienced the occasion would love to do it again. Remember that it is free parking and free entry to the show.

So, to all you previous volunteers and to those who would like to help for the first time, please contact me as soon as possible (preferably before you archive this issue) to reserve your preferred day. If you don't ring me I will come chasing you. Here is my telephone and fax number **01386-40646**. If it is on ansafone, then please leave your name and phone number and I will get back to you.

Please make my job that bit easier by being a willing volunteer. For those who have not been before and not sure of the procedures etc, I would endeavour to put you on the stand with someone who has done it before. I will be standing by my phone (diary in hand) as soon as you receive this issue of Perihelion. So if you can't get through, then please keep on trying.

Many thanks for your support in the past and I look forward to it continuing in the future.

Phillip Hossell (Comet 650, Evesham SC)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JAN - MAR 1999

January 8 - 17: London Boat Show, Earls Court
 February 20-28: Leisure Exhibition, NEC Birmingham
 March 6 - 7: Sailboat 99, Alexandra Palace

Early open meetings and championship dates:

17.04	Sat	Shearwater	Nic Cross	01373 822258	Confirmed
17.04.	Sat	Winsford Flash	Brian Herring	01625 585745	Confirmed
24.04.	Sat	Fishers Green	Peter Seagar	01279 433851	Provisional

Association Championship

01.05	Sat	Staunton Harold	Trish Moore	01509 261845	Confirmed
02.05	Sun		or John Orchard	01283 701285	
08.05	Sat	Chester	John Edwards	01829 781234	Confirmed
09.05	<u>SUN</u>	Crawley Mariners	Diana Thompson	01737 552482	Confirmed
15.05	Sat	Banbury	Phil Henman	01926 640271	Confirmed
22.05	Sat	Glossop	Stuart Gilder	01457 861452	Confirmed
23.05	<u>SUN</u>	Sutton Bingham	Gordon Parker	01458 223058	Confirmed

National Championships

30.07	Fri	Hampton Pier	Geoff Gambrill	01227 361156	Confirmed
31.07	Sat				
01.08	Sun				

Crawley Mariners feel that they have monopolised the race training sessions. Any volunteers for hosting a race training day in 1999 ? Pingewood will hold a general training day on 25th September as usual.

TALKING TO ... MARGARET HYLTON

Editor's note for very new members:
From 1987 to 1996 Margaret Hylton's occupation was the sole distributor of new Comets for designer and builder Andrew Simmons. She traded under the name "Dinghy Leisure" and she arranged demonstrations of the Comet and delivered new ones all over the country. Husband Barrie assisted her in that period and he has now joined her in the business. They now concentrate on buying and selling second-hand Comets, repairs and refurbishments and hire out their apartment in Portugal (Comet included), mostly to Comet sailors.



Alan Browning: In a way I feel that I've come full circle now because it was 4 years ago that you suggested that I chat to Jake Sutton and here we are, in chat number 12, with you in the chair! What a good idea it was of yours, I've had many favourable comments about the series.

I want you to talk particularly on your work as the distributor of new Comets, but first what kind of sailing background did you have, I believe the Topper came into it didn't it?

Margaret Hylton: Yes, I had a lot to do with the Topper. We used to go to the Topper Nationals for many years, the first time must have been in about 1983. My son also sailed a Topper and we went around together, it was good fun. Going back to how we started sailing, we often had holidays at the seaside and then one year we went on a canal holiday. We enjoyed the activity aspect of that but we missed going to the seaside. The following year we looked around for an activity holiday by the sea and that's how we started sailing. We took a family sailing holiday at Newton Ferrers in Devon, Barrie, myself and sons Gary and Ian. We were all new to sailing, that was in 1980. Before that I'd never given sailing a thought. For a year or more we lived in Cyprus and had friends who sailed but we thought "why go to all that trouble when you could swim or snorkel". After the sailing course we

enquired about sailing clubs and found one very close to us, Aylesbury S.C., near Wendover. So we bought a GP14, the kind of boat that most people had in those days, joined the club and, Sunday after Sunday I crewed for Barrie - but not a very committed crew I have to say. Ian had a Mirror to start with, and was very keen. He was about 11 years old then. There were no single-handers at the club, they weren't allowed, you were very restricted in the classes to sail in those days.

Then a group of us, three ladies, went on a weekend course at Grafham, just for fun really, and to increase our confidence, and there we had a go in Toppers. I was so smitten, sailing on my own with nobody to tell me what to do or to argue with, but in order to get a Topper I had to persuade our club that we should have a single-hander class. It had been tried before, and it didn't work, but they agreed and of course with Toppers at Aylesbury S.C. we had to have an open meeting to get some kudos, like the Grads, the Fireflies and the Mirrors. Then to get people to come to our open meetings I had to go to others and there I was on the Topper circuit. I never really wanted to race, all I wanted to do was to be able to plane up and down the water like the youngsters, manage the boat safely and get back to the jetty, but I did like meeting the people in those open meetings. I didn't always race, if it was too blowy I often chickened out but I enjoyed going. I enjoyed the safety of a regulated event with the opportunity to sail on the sea, it was like an adventure to me. I wouldn't have wanted to do it all on my own, I wanted somebody watching over me. At the Topper Nationals there were big fleets and I rarely finished higher than 100th, but that didn't matter to me. Maybe the race officers had to wait for people like me to finish, but at least they knew I was out there, if I'd been sailing on my own it can happen that nobody knows whether you're there or not. As a result of those meetings I went on the Topper Committee and then became Southern area representative, but after my interest in the Comet developed it was time to leave the Toppers.

I first saw a Comet at my club, Keith Lamdin bought one. Then they had the Comet Nationals at Aylesbury S.C. in 1986, Keith from the beginning was very enthusiastic and worked hard to build up the Class Association. Andrew Simmons was there and Ian and I tried the Comet and we bought an ex-demo boat.

Alan: I found that your service as the Comet distributor was superb, a 'phone call would usually have any items I wanted on my doorstep the next day. I was very impressed, but how did it come about that you became the Comet distributor?

Margaret: My son and I sailed our Comet at some events but he was soon to be leaving home and I needed something to turn my attention to, like everybody does when the children leave home. So Andy came along just as I was looking for something I needed and a deal was done where I became the Comet distributor.

Barrie and I had clear ideas on how the boat should be promoted and the type of water it was suitable for. Because of my experience going round with the Toppers and knowing so many clubs, we targeted particular clubs, sometimes particular individuals.

Alan: I was always puzzled by the name “Dinghy Leisure” because for me, as a novice, sailing a Comet is more like work! In anything but a light wind, if treated as leisure a Comet is very quick to capsize you! How did the name “Dinghy Leisure” arise?

Margaret: I think originally, when we were playing about with ideas for names, I probably had thrown in “Comet Dinghies” but Andy said that he might at some subsequent date want to use the word “Comet”, so I couldn’t have that. He did eventually change his firm’s name from “AMS Marine” (his initials) to “Comet Dinghies” which was a sensible move because it was not obvious that AMS Marine was the sole manufacturer of Comets. The name for my firm had to do with boats and that gave the word “Dinghy”. The “Leisure” word came because I wanted a name that sounded less in a hurry than “racing”, you know, a contrast to racing, that sailing didn’t have to be all about racing, but it could be just about having fun and to me “Leisure” was that sort of a word. At that time the firm was just me. Barrie had a full-time job in London and in fact when we did our first London Boat Show with Andy we all stayed at Barrie’s office because it had accommodation as well. It was then that we settled on the name.

Alan: In Perihelion, particularly the early ones, there were many complimentary references to your sales technique, quietly giving relevant information without any sign of the ‘hard sell’. Occasionally you would write in Perihelion about trying times or difficult customers though. Did you have any really awkward customers?

Margaret: I did write once in Perihelion about difficult customers but someone recognised himself! He was actually someone I liked very much and had great respect for, a very good customer and because I did not want to offend anyone I never did that again. My comment was tongue-in-cheek but he recognised himself and mentioned it to me. Oh yes, we had one chap who pestered us with questions on whether a Comet could be towed behind a Reliant three-wheeler. He now questions people for Perihelion instead! **Anne Browning:** That was you Alan! **Alan:** Did I? I know I asked Reliants and the insurance people and I expect I asked you too. The question was important to me because in those days I couldn’t have a berth at the club for a Comet, I had to trail 7 miles to the club every time. If I couldn’t use the Reliant I probably wouldn’t have bought a Comet. **Margaret:** On my lack of “hard-sell”, I like meeting people and talking to them about themselves and about their

club before I talk to them about the boat. Sometimes this was awkward for me, some people came to the show year after year and I'd always remember something about them, it might be their rheumatism, and I'd end up talking to them about that every year and they never bought a boat! Some weren't particularly interested in boats either, they just liked going to boat shows and talking about something else. At the boat shows Barrie and I knew our roles without really planning it. If a visitor hesitated, I would go out and chat to them. I'd chat about the crowds or the weather or something like that. They'd say it was a nice boat and I'd say it was a nice boat, but then they might ask a technical question, then Barrie would come forward and do his bit. Even when Barrie was working full-time he almost always came to the boat shows, at least on one of the days. I remember the very first Birmingham show I was involved in I did it all on my own. I went up with Andy and we set it all up, but Andy had to go back and build boats which left me on my own. For some of the shows just Andy and I went.

There were always some people who thought they knew better and would question why Andrew had done various things on the boat, even if they weren't sailors at all. Then there were those who always used to run their hands underneath the hull, I think it was a tactile motivation, they liked to get their hands on something smooth and rounded.

Alan: What features of the Comet did you feel to be the most important to get over to customers?

Margaret: I always saw the Comet as a class racing boat, even though it was not my main interest. I could see the role for the Comet, especially on waters like Aylesbury S.C.. But of course Andy had designed it to be a very versatile boat, easily car-toppable, a boat you could take away very conveniently on holiday. Alan: Have you heard much of people doing this? Margaret: Yes, in fact some of the people who bought Comets in the early days weren't racers at all. I'm still in touch with families like the Heyes, who came here and collected their Comet at the start of a month-long holiday on the continent. They needed a car-toppable boat because they were towing a caravan and car-topping is very easy to do with an Easy-Loader. As the years went by, Steve Heyes joined Redesmere and now you see him in the open meeting results (4th this year in the Northern Aphelion - Ed). I also know of two Comet sailors who had their boats in Spain, had apartments close to each other and sailed off the same beach. They wanted boats big enough to take a companion and have told me how they have used the Comets to sail to the nearest town to do a bit of shopping. Those boats are still in Spain, when the apartments were sold the boats were sold with them!

I would say that 50% of Comet owners have them just for fun. They often have their favourite places for sailing. The Camping & Caravanning Club Boating Group runs many events, with their own rescue facilities, and any class of boat can join in. A lot of people only ever sail within the Boating Group and some of those are Comets. We sold quite a few Comets to a very small club called Pool Hall. They used to gather as a group and go off to another venue, Bala or Paxton for example, taking their own rescue boat and organising their own events. Again, any class of boat was accepted, it didn't matter. They had caravans and camper vans and you would very rarely have seen them at an ordinary open meeting.

There's the low maintenance aspect too, I think when the Comet came along it was a boat for our time. I mean people were really busy working and wanted to sail in the Summer on Wednesdays after work and one day at the weekend but didn't want to have to spend the time in between on painting and other maintenance. With a Comet you have to tighten the screws occasionally and make sure nothing is frayed and the tiller extension not about to break but that's not a lot to have to do.

Alan: I have always wondered why sailing 2-up featured so much in the Comet advertising. Why was that?

Margaret: The Comet was designed for one person but the width of the cockpit enables you to take another person too, there's room for them to sit on the other side. You can get two small children in with you, Mark Wilkins and Steve Monks have done that. Also, the cockpit is deep so that if you have a child in it they have a greater feeling of security than they would have in a Laser where they would be just hanging on. The Comet is used as a training boat too with both an instructor and a student. On demonstration days Andrew used to take people out for a sail so that they could get the feel of the boat. So you see a 2-up capability gave more flexibility. The Comet can be used for teaching the children to sail or taking mum out to give her a taste of sailing, so with a 2-up capability the family is getting more for its money, even though much of the time only one person will be in it. It helps the family justify the purchase, it's not so selfish.

Alan: I know a number of Graduate sailors who have bought Comets and some GP14 sailors too. Generally can you give an idea of the kind of people who buy Comets?

Margaret: No, I really can't - they were all sorts. In the early days a number of Topper sailors bought Comets, but nowadays some of them will be looking for a more racy looking boat than the Comet and there is a much greater choice of boat available. I would never personally be looking for a racy looking boat, I'd have been

looking for simplicity. Some people were very experienced and knew what they were looking for, but of course they might afterwards go on to another boat. Others were completely new to sailing and we felt that we could in all honesty sell them a Comet and know that if they were keen to practice it was the boat which they would eventually be able to cope with adequately. Some people who have Comets don't buy them at all, Peter Hayes' first Comet was bought for him by his wife as a surprise birthday present! Another family bought one for their son at Christmas, I delivered it next door and the handbook was parcelled up, not the boat! .

Alan: I've heard some say that it took them a long time to get the hang of sailing a Comet, but they sail well now.

Margaret: I think it depends when you start, it's true that youngsters go through the learning curve a lot quicker than older people. If you want to learn to do anything you have to do it regularly, it's like driving a car. You've also got to want to succeed, but a lot of people who've never wanted to be competitive have learned to sail a Comet safely in a reasonable amount of time

Alan: There are now many lady Comet sailors and you must have had a big influence on this. What do you think ladies find most attractive in the Comet?

Margaret: There were lady Topper sailors at Pool Hall who felt that in a Comet they could be more on a par with the GP14 sailors because the yardsticks weren't very different. Although the GPs were faster, the nippy Comet could take advantage of windshifts. Lots of ladies found that you didn't have to crouch up in the cockpit, it was more comfortable than many single-handers and that was an attractive aspect. Also the fact that the controls are simple and they could get it in and out of the water on their own, they could be independent. It sails well in light airs but it doesn't immediately overpower you in a blow. Some boats accelerate so rapidly you've really got to have your wits about you, but in a Comet you've got time, you can free off the sail, it's very responsive and it will quickly level itself. It's not weight sensitive and comes in a choice of colours. I wanted one and I thought there must be lots of other ladies just like me who also wanted one, but I didn't target ladies. I remember Jackie Hudson who bought her Comet long before I had one. She sailed regularly in the Nationals in the early days and was the type of person who always finished her races. Her husband Dave also bought a Comet. Dave was a professional photographer who took a lot of beautiful photos in the early days, but then he had a serious accident on his motor-bike, damaging his leg. I found that I could talk to ladies easily and I think that was because there was no way they could mistake me for a top-of-the-fleet sailor.

Alan: You have been involved in the early stages of several class associations. There are now a few Minos around, how long do you think it will take them to get a viable association going?

Margaret: Getting a viable class association depends on the enthusiasm of the people involved, it doesn't just happen. You need somebody with the enthusiasm of Keith Lamdin, John Windibank or Henry Jagers, our Association Chairmen. You also need an intense marketing push to support it. There are only a dozen or so Minos so far but I think the number of boats is not as important as the enthusiasm. Building up the Comet Association was slow at first when there were not many Comet sailors but they still formed an association and ran a few events. The vital thing was to draw up a constitution and have it validated by the RYA, and that took time. There might also be prejudice against a Mino Association by the Comet Association, like there often is in clubs against new boat classes.

Alan: You've seen the complete development of the Mino haven't you?

Margaret: Yes, the first small-rig Comet was a one-off done at the request of Brian Rothwell (see Perihelion 30, page 9 - Ed). Brian was not a racing sailor, he was a man who liked quality and he had a daughter with special needs who he took out sailing but being, as he said, "in the bus pass category", he wanted a boat that was not too demanding. He recognised that the Comet was a well-made boat, he bought one and sailed it for a time reefed but didn't like the look of the reefed sail and he could no longer use the controls. Accordingly a smaller mast and 45 sq ft sail was made for him as a special order. Sadly, Brian died two years ago, in fact I resold his boat and still have that smaller rig, if anybody's interested in making me an offer. Brian was very happy with the smaller rig, but at the time the advent of the Mino was not envisaged. That came later when we realised that a smaller rig would open up the boat to a wider market, for youngsters and for oldsters, as Andrew used to say in his brochures "a boat for all reasons". The Mino sail is 54 sq ft, a little larger than Brian's. Barrie has used the Mino rig when training children, they can use all the sail controls whereas with a reefed standard sail you lose the controls because you've got to keep everything tight in order to keep the reef in.

Alan: Youngsters don't seem to be taking to the Mino do they.

Margaret: As I said, there's now a lot of choice of GRP single-handers for youngsters, they have peer pressure to be ambitious and the Laser has two smaller rigs available. On the other hand I could see myself growing into a Mino very comfortably. As well as it being easier to rig I've felt more confident in a blow. As for joining in races, it wouldn't worry me whether I entered the Nationals or not, or whether I just followed everybody else round the course for fun.

I must admit that I didn't foresee the prejudice there would be in the Comet class against the Mino rig, I always thought there would be a way to accommodate the Mino sailors within the class. Some classes incorporate a cruising weekend with their Nationals, some sailors only going for the cruising part, and I suppose that's one way the Minos could be included but I don't know how many people would make the effort to do that. **Anne Browning:** The venues would have to be nice place to go to, some Nationals are at bare and rugged places. For example, I wouldn't go to Sheppey for the scenery. **Margaret:** From Hampton Pier dinghies cruise to Whitstable. Poole harbour is nice too, once I went down there with a friend with our Comets for a day's sail, but it was rather a long day!

It's so easy to rig a Mino, I remember the first boat I delivered, Comet 100 to Henry Jagers, we both had trouble with the mast. Getting it out of the boat was fine but then we had problems, it was so long. Before we brought it safely to the ground it was touch and go who would fall first, me Henry or the mast. But that was a long time ago. One of the last boats I delivered was to a family who chose to buy both rigs. They sailed on the North Norfolk coast and thought both rigs would suit all their requirements, indeed a boat for all reasons. **Anne:** For a lot of youngsters it seems that going on to the Laser is the right image for them. **Margaret:** I've always felt that the average Comet sailor wasn't looking for "image", he was a sensible person and could make decisions for himself, evaluate what he wanted regardless of "image". Youngsters who are going to be very competitive, will obviously go for the standard Comet but for older people, who find for some reason or another that they'd like to have a more manageable boat, when the time comes to give up their Comet they have the Mino as an option. **Alan:** Racing would need to be on handicap but at least we now have in the new Comet brochure a Portsmouth number of 1193, twenty more than the standard Comet. Just what the status of that handicap is I don't know, but clubs could use that. **Margaret:** Yes, but I'd say that there are more arguments in clubs about handicaps than there is about anything else.

Alan: For a long time you took video recordings for the Association. I have a number of your tapes, all of which are very well taken. You have given us a lot of pleasure, and possibly help too, by allowing us to see ourselves. Did you enjoy that and did you learn anything from it?

Margaret: Yes, I did enjoy that. Video is a creative tool and it appealed to me, I enjoy the mechanics of filming, the editing. **Alan:** I remember you at Kingsmead tracking Concorde until it passed a Comet mast, then tilting down to the boat.

Margaret: Yes, I used to like doing gimmicky things like that. I once got a new angle on the Comet by sitting in the water in a dry-suit and filming from there! After a season's sailing I would edit a video for the next year's shows, containing a large number of snippets of all sorts of aspects of Comet sailing, it was very time-consuming though. Those



videos covered not only open meetings and championships but also demonstration days, training at clubs and a miscellany of shots, for example two-up sailing and even a dog in the boat! At the shows then we could to some extent choose video clips to suit a customer's interests, questions or worries. I believe John Windibank wanted to compile a video library full of interesting clips from all the Nationals I filmed, but I did not have time to do that. I could have learned from the videos if I'd been that way inclined but I was never competitive, and I couldn't really apply that sort of knowledge to racing. I hope that other people who saw the videos and wanted to learn from them did learn something. We know about recovering from a capsize, sailing downwind, where to sit in windy weather and how to sit still and watch the wind indicators. I could see people doing things that were wrong and the consequences of their mistakes. **Alan:** From the videos you can compare your sailing with that of the top sailors. **Margaret:** Yes, a lot of people bought the videos to do that, and some who'd never been to competitive events bought them so that they could feel part of it. I was rather like that, all I ever wanted to do was to sail safely and keep out of trouble. For me, the boat, the wind and the water were enough of a challenge without having other people trying to get water on me at a mark or trying to catch me out in other ways. I once filmed one of Keith Lamdin's training days, it was satisfactory but would have been easier to hear what he was saying had I used a separate microphone.

Alan: One last question, you have your apartment in Portugal, it sounds super, what's it like to sail a Comet there?

Margaret: The Comet is kept at a windsurfing centre about 20 minutes drive from the apartment. We chose the site with great care, it's at a long sandy bay and although it is by the sea, it is in a river estuary and there is a breakwater to seaward so it is like a big lake. That protects it from the sea and the waves are not large.

Launching from the shore is easy and the wind in the afternoons is usually force 3 to 4. The Comet has both standard and Mino rigs. A few Comet sailors have been out to the apartment and used the boat. Most fly out from Gatwick and hire a car when they get there, it's cheaper than driving all the way.

Alan: Thank you Margaret for chatting to Anne and I this morning, and I think for many of the older Comet sailors you will have revived some pleasant memories.

Margaret: I've enjoyed it too and would like to say that for many years Dinghy Leisure was my social life as well as my business. From the beginning I've worked closely with the Class Association and received tremendous support from them. It was an honour to be made a life member in 1996.

Dinghy Leisure

Second hand Comets bought and sold.

Repairs and refurbishments.

*Thinking of taking a break? Then you
may wish to consider our holiday home in
Portugal.*

Margaret or Barrie

01494 863082

6 Wychwood
Little Kingshill
Great Missenden
Bucks
HP16 0EJ

Dinghy Leisure
SERVICES

1998 AGM MINUTES

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, HELD AT FRENESHAM POND SAILING CLUB, Sunday 24th May 1998

The meeting was attended by Andrew Simmons, members of the Committee and 38 members of the Association.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Keith Lamdin, John Edwards, Guy Wilkins, Mark Wilkins, Stuart Gilder, Emer Power, Heather Back, Barrie Hylton and Nancy Gould.

2. Minutes of the AGM held on Saturday 30th August 1997

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed and signed. Proposed by John Windibank. Seconded by Brian Welham.

3. Reports by Officers

a. Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and hoped they were enjoying the Championships. He said it was less than nine months since the last AGM at which he was elected and thanked them for their support.

Last years Nationals, at Hampton Pier Yacht Club, had an entry of 31 Comets and 3 Minos. It had been a successful event sailed in what most competitors thought were ideal conditions, if a little too windy for some. John Challenger emerged as National Champion with Robert Hamilton as 1st Junior, Heather Back 1st Lady, and Jeff Bryant 1st Veteran.

This year we have 51 Comets competing in the Championships at this excellent inland venue [Frensham Pond] which equals our best ever turn-out.

Regarding open meetings, 1997 saw a slight drop on 1996 in the total number of competitors and in the number of qualifiers for the various series. On the other hand the average number of entries at individual events was up. The Orbital Trophy was won by Alex Reeve. Phil Hossell, Mark Wilkins, Alex Reeve, and Phil Hossell won the North, South, East, and West Aphelion Trophies respectively.

Our exhibition entries were as enjoyable and professional as ever and many thanks to Stuart Gilder for finding and organising all the volunteers for the NEC show last February. The Sailboat exhibition at Alexandra Palace in March had been great fun if rather a hectic weekend. Thanks to Brian Welham for lending us his boat.

Thanks were extended to all the Committee for their support and hard work throughout the year and especial thanks were given to Norah, Derek, Alan, Phillip, and Stuart for their individual roles and the vital parts they had played. Lastly a big thank you was given to Fiona for her work over many years as prize buyer.

The class had shown considerable growth in recent months at quite a few clubs and the Chairman said that the builder would be giving a report later on new boat sales which were going well at present.

Ending his report, the Chairman said that while our membership numbers had been down we were steadily regaining recently lapsed members as a result of Norah's initiative. The Association was planning a fuller membership drive and existing members were asked to help identify and approach Comet owners who were not currently members.

b. Secretary

The Secretary reported on the proposed venues for the national events over the next two years as well as the Open programme. She warned that the increase in, the number of Open meetings may affect attendance levels.

c. Newsletter Editor

The newsletter editor thanked everyone for their contributions, particularly photographs. He requested clubs to send information and reports to him as soon as possible after meetings.

d. Phillip Hossell

Phil reiterated the request that all results be sent to him as soon as possible after an event. A review of the 1997 results as well as 'tips for the top' appeared in Perihelion 46. He concluded by asking members to tell the committee of any second-hand Comets available for sale.

e. Photographic competition

Henry reported that the photographic competition was poorly supported last year. It was agreed that photographs submitted for use in Perihelion should be entered in the competition automatically.

4. Builder's Report

Andrew commented that it was good to see so many Comets on the water with the older ones as competitive as the new. He recognised that having a strong friendly Class helped to sell boats, which showed in the sales resulting from the Caravan and Leisure Show at which he did not have a stand. He felt that in spite of a spate of new dinghies on the market, the main competition to new Comets is second-hand ones.

5. Adoption of Accounts

The Treasurer spoke to the accounts which had been published in Perihelion 46. The accounts were agreed and adopted.

Proposed by Alex Reeve. Seconded by Phillip Hossell.

6. Consideration of Motions

There was considerable discussion on the proposed amendment to rule 16a.iii to read 'Three cleats on aft end of foredeck positioned within 75 mm of deck centreline. The type and material is optional but they must retain rope when uncleated', particularly in respect of the practicalities involved. The motion was carried on a show of hands [24 for, 6 abstentions.]

7. Election of Officers

Fiona Cauter retired as trophy buyer. The Association thanked her for all her hard work over the years, and presented her with a wooden bowl as a mark of gratitude.

The rest of the committee was re-elected en bloc, and is as follows:

Chairman - Henry Jagers
Treasurer - Derek Coleman
Secretary - Norah Gould
Committee - Alan Browning [Newsletter]
 Phillip Hossell [Results/Trophies]
 Stuart Gilder

8. Appointment of Auditor

John Edwards was appointed as Auditor. Proposed by Heidi Dodd. Seconded by John Windibank.

9. Any Other Business

a. Class Flag

In the absence of any new designs being submitted it was agreed that the existing flag should be used.

b. Millennium

John Windibank reported that a subcommittee had been formed and, having approached the Duo and Trio Association, was awaiting their response.

c. Comet prizes

It was noted that a new prize structure is in place for the 1998 National Championship, with prizes for individual races, the highest placed newcomer and a Team prize.

At this point the Association was presented with a handsome cup by Frensham Pond S.C. This has been donated as a Team Trophy.

d. Insignia

Alan Browning asked if the suggestion to put the word 'Comet' on the sail had been considered. It was felt to be unnecessary.

e. Perihelion

It was accepted that the late delivery of Perihelion 46 caused some problems in respect of race training. It was also acknowledged that the delay had been caused by the printer.

f. Open Programme

Henry was congratulated on the production of a credit card sized programme.

Whether old or young
Control your Comet on the run
Keep it upright and boat under sail
Then common sense will prevail
To reach dry land you will have scored
Or a diver on the sea bed explored.

**RESULTS OF THE 1998
PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION**



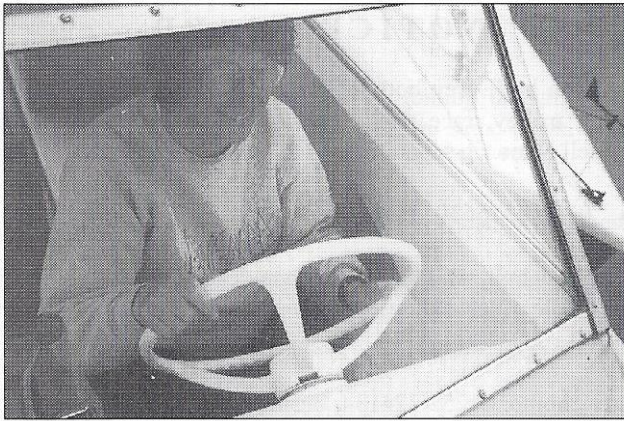
“1998 Nationals at Frensham Pond”

1st prize, Comet racing: Jane Middis (Comet 744)



“Just checking the daggerboard”

1st prize, Comet fun: A.Stevens (Comet 147)



“Going for a ride”

2nd prize, Comet fun: Jenny Colclough (Comet 660)

EDITOR'S NOTES

In this issue is a new venture, a page for you to write to the Committee! You'll have to cut the page out and post it to the Treasurer, for it's on the back of the Membership Renewal form! I have not given these two sides page numbers so the Newsletter will be complete after you've cut it out.

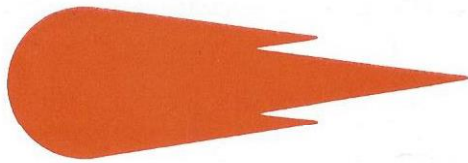
Many thanks to those who have sent in photographs. In particular to Liz Hossell for no less than ten photos (the cover and pages 7, 9, 13, 15, 16 and 19). Those on pages 6 and 22 are by Anne Browning and of course the Photographic Competition winners, Jane Middis, A.Stevens and Jenny Colclough.

We have another excellent review of a season of Comet racing by Phil Hossell (page 4) and also an account, by Comet 650, of an ordeal it suffered early in the year, and what an ordeal (page 14)! That story has a happy ending.

I'd looked forward to chatting with Margaret Hylton for nearly six months, the result is on pages 22 - 30 and I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

It's farewell to a stalwart of the Comet scene, Errol Edwards, of Chew Valley Lake S.C., he's sold his boat now and tells me he's going to buy a Solo. Errol has been sailing Comet 334 since new in 1989, coming 3rd in the Nationals in 1990 and runner-up in 1993. He has been an avid traveller too, winning many open meetings and, while living in Bristol, carried off the Northern Aphelion in his best year, 1993. I wish him well for the future.

Alan Browning, Editor



Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association