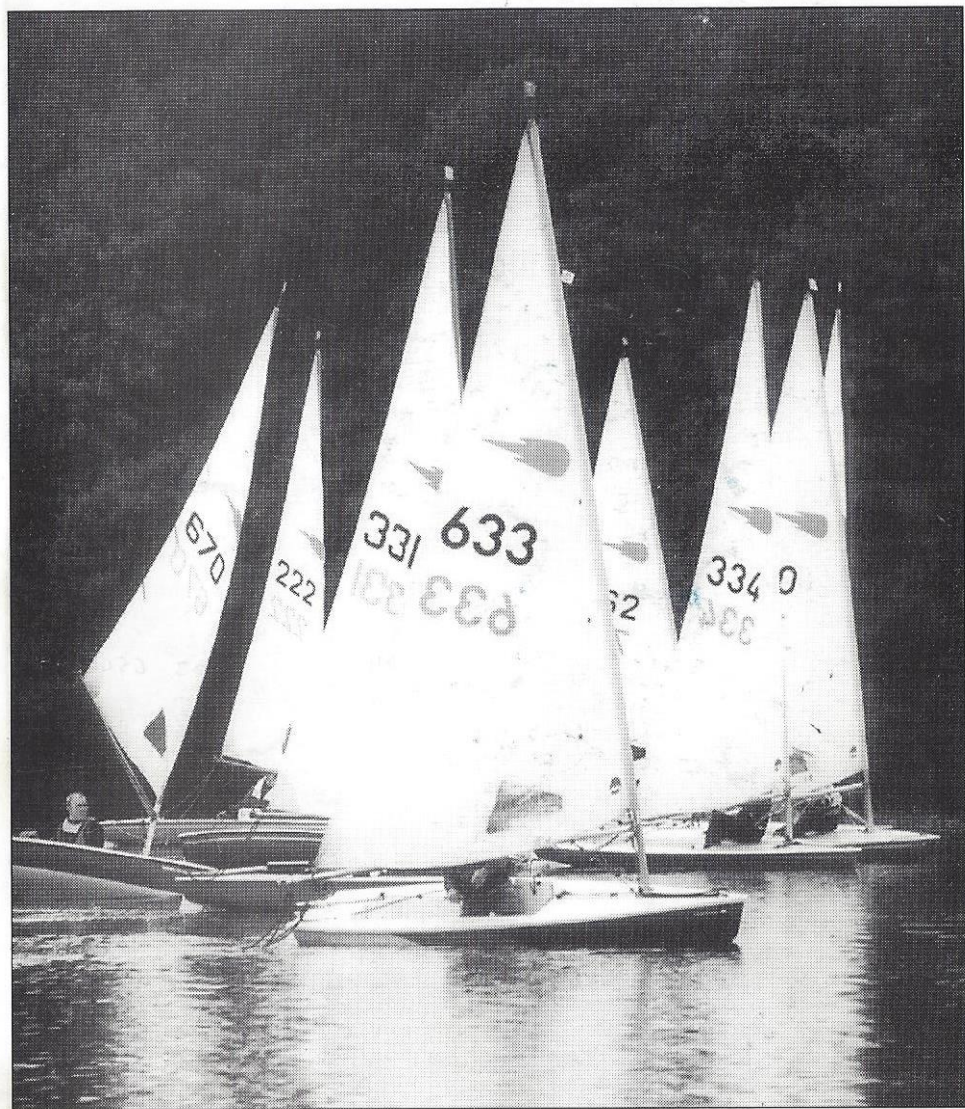


PERIHELION

 53

Winter 1999/2000



Comet Class Association Newsletter

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 53
WINTER 1999/2000

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Front cover:

Redesmere 1999, featuring Northern Aphelion winner
John Edwards (633) with a group of Redesmere boats.

(Photo: Liz Hossell)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The last open meeting seems an age ago, Orbital and Aphelion winners known, current champions planning the defence of their titles - and the rest of us hoping we can do better, a feast of sailing memories to last through the winter: another year nearly over.

I won't dwell on the details, suffice to say I have enjoyed this year greatly and I hope you have too. Sailing and racing Comets has played a major part of my life as, of course, it has in various ways for many years. It provides such a good excuse to get away at the weekends and to visit friends and places all over the country. Whether racing, cruising, or introducing others to our sport, what better way is there to spend a few days or weeks than by the water, at a sailing club, in the company of other Comet sailors?

It's always encouraging, and good publicity for the class, to see the Comet sticker proudly displayed on members' cars and to see the Comet Association badge being worn. The current designs have served us well but we thought it time for a change. For one thing, the stickers are used also by Comet Dinghies and we thought there should be something specific to the Association rather than the builder. There are also very few of our present badges remaining. Hence, over the past few weeks, or months to be more honest, we have been designing a new Association sticker and badge. I say "we" because all the Committee have had some input into choosing the designs and the idea worked on for the sticker came originally from John Windibank and emphasizes the notion of belonging to the Class Association. The new badge is in embroidered cloth and will come with an iron-on backing for easy application to a favourite sweatshirt, jacket, trousers, sailing bag, or whatever you fancy. It can also be sewn on if preferred. Anyway, the artwork has been done and the orders placed so that early in the new year, when you have renewed your subscription, you will receive a new car window sticker and a new Comet badge. I hope you like them.

You'll find your membership renewal form somewhere in this issue and we will be very happy if you would write any comments, suggestions, or criticisms on the back. I can assure you they will be gratefully received, as will your cheques. Please don't delay or you won't get your spring edition. In fact, do it now and you can be among the first to have the new sticker and badge!

Whatever you think of the Millennium or have planned already, it is not too early to be marking up dates throughout the 2000 season. The full programme will be published in early Spring but take a look now at Norah's "Notes from the Committee" and book your time for the National Championships at Glossop (a

fine inland venue in a magnificent part of the country) and the Association Championships at Mudeford (a uniquely open but sheltered sea venue - no waves). Then there is the special Comet Millennium event at Chipstead which will bring together all three of Comet Dinghies designs for a couple of days of friendly sailing events, family fun, and more. Not to be missed!

As you can see, Norah has already covered most of the dates for our 2000 calendar and found us a couple of new venues too, both keen to hold open meetings. Sadly, though, two of our regulars may be missing, at least for this year. Please give your support to as many events as you possibly can and help make 2000 the Year of the Comet.

We now move from sailing to the exhibition season. You will have seen our advertisement in the Racing Classes review edition of *Yachts & Yachting* and we will also be in the late February edition in time for *SailBoat*. Comet Dinghies is planning a bigger and better display than ever at *SailBoat* and we will be doing our best, too. Before then we hope to be at the Boat Caravan and Leisure Show at the NEC in late February. So although the new sailing season seems some way off, I hope to see many of you again at these and other events.

Finally a big personal thank you to Norah, Derek, Liz, Phil, Alan, Stuart, Paul, Nick, and Keith for all they have done this past year and for all they are going to do in the next!

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

Good Sailing for Year 2000, Year of the Comet,

Henry Jagers, Chairman.



Photographic competition: Winner, Comet racing

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

NORTHERN AREA

Redesmere

1	650	P Hossell
2	334	M Zoefitg
3	633	J Edwards
4	585	B Herring
5	500	H Jaggars
6	670	P Hayes

SOUTHERN AREA

Pingewood

1	657	M Wilkins
2	500	H Jaggars
3	626	L Dean
4	323	A Walter
5	650	P Hossell
6	745	N Warren

EASTERN AREA

Littleton

1	657	M Wilkins
2	549	M Vinson
3	565	R Smallwood
4	188	S Thompson
5	707	D Coleman
6	323	A Walter

CENTRAL AREA

Arden

1	650	P Hossell
2	641	P Hinde
3	633	J Edwards
4	585	B Herring
5	500	H Jaggars
6	673	R Lemon

EASTERN AREA

Kingsmead

1	657	M Wilkins
2	353	G Wilkins
3	188	S Thompson
4	500	H Jaggars
5	707	D Coleman
6	650	P Hossell



Photographic competition: Runner-up, Comet racing.

CYBERSPACE REPORT

Just to let members know that the web site is now Netscape and IE compatible. Sorry to the people that tried to access the site with Netscape and only viewed a blank page, You can use any browser that is frames compatible, which is most of the current ones. I am looking in to printing problems from the site but if you see any other bugs please email me.

There have been 800 hits or views of the site since the launch date. I'm not sure what I expected but not bad with two Comet's sold from the site for sure so far. I have also set up an area where discussions, comments and chat can go on. You can post or read a subject of discussion and leave your reply or idea on the page. Then come back to the page later and see if anyone has replied to your question or added to the discussion. I have called this area "The Bar" as in the place to go after sailing! Maybe some worthy discussions can be published in Perihelion for a wider audience if the idea works. You can think of it as a black-board where people leave messages as they pass by. Please remember that this area is open to all on the Internet so please make it as positive as possible, which I am sure it will be.

Another area is the guest book where you can leave comments on the site or Comets in general. Such as Katie from Essex who is 15, left a message to say how much she enjoyed racing her Comet.

I hope this explains some of the facilities on the site which may stimulate some social after sailing

Tony Ellison (Comet 645, Littleton S.C.)

Editor's note:

You will find the address of the Comet website on the inside cover of Perihelion. What I'm doing at the moment, as from issue 52, is to send Tony Ellison a disc with everything on it from Perihelion that I think might be suitable for the website. No articles, but diary of events, results etc.. If members want to see the Perihelion information before Perihelion comes out they can do this by visiting the website, because I send off my disc at the beginning of the month and three weeks later they get Perihelion posted to them. The Internet can also help at the junctions between issues for, due to the timing of things, some clubs don't get a flyer about their open meetings at a suitable time.

APHELION RESULTS - 1999

NORTHERN AREA

			WFL	CHS	GLS	CMB	RDS	Pts
1	633	J Edwards	1	6	4	2	3	6
2	650	P Hossell	10	3	2		1	6
3	670	P Hayes	6	1	1		6	8
4	331	S Heyes	9	2	3	3	14	8
5	500	H Jagers	4	4	4	1	5	9
6	585	B Herring	8	5		5	4	14
7	100	S Bellamy	3			7	9	19
8	643	K Appleby	14	7	4	9	12	20
9	762	R Stevenson	5	10		6	15	21
10	411	W Ablett	17	9		8	10	27

EASTERN AREA

			FGR	CRW	CHP	LIT	KMD	Pts
1	657	M Wilkins	2	4	1	1	1	3
2	353	G Wilkins	1	1	2		2	4
3	188	S Thompson		3		4	3	10
4	323	A Walter	3	11	7	6	11	16
5	565	R Smallwood	7	6		3		16
6	707	D Coleman	8	8	13	5	5	18
7	99	P Luttmann		5	6	7	8	18
8	745	N Warren	6		4	8		18
9	500	H Jagers	4			12	4	20
10	518	R Ballam	5	10	9	14	15	24
11	63	C Robinson		17	8	10	13	31
12	117	M Thompson		12	11	13	9	32
13	50	D Thompson		16	17	24	17	50

SOUTHERN AREA

			TAP	FRN	HIL	PIN	Pts
1	657	M Wilkins	1	2	1	1	3
2	565	R Smallwood	6	4	3		13
3	711	B Welham	5	6		7	18
4	745	N Warren	8	7		6	21
5	707	D Coleman	11	9		9	29

WESTERN AREA

	SHR	SBG	MRT	MUD	COT	Pts
1	650	P Hossell	3	1	2	6
2	565	R Smallwood	1		2 3	6
3	419	P Govier	1	2	4 6	7
4	500	H Jaggars	4	5	13 1	10
5	707	D Coleman	2	8	11 4	14
6	745	N Warren	3	5	8	16
7	460	M Govier		9 3	6 16	18
8	518	R Ballam		7	8 5	20
9	183	M Gingell	7	10	9 11	26

CENTRAL AREA

	BAN	RED	NAS	AYL	ARD	Pts	
1	650	P Hossell	8	4	1	1	3
2	500	H Jaggars	2	1	3	4 5	6
3	585	B Herring	4	5	5	5 4	13
4	323	A Walter	3		7 7		17
5	641	P Hinde		7	9	12 2	18
6	762	R Stevenson	10	8	8	11 8	24



Five of the six qualifiers in the Central Aphelion:
P Hinde, B Herring, R Stevenson, H Jaggars, P Hossell

(Photo: Liz Hossell)

ORBITAL RESULTS - 1999

			Six best results					Nats	Assn	Mtgs	Pts	
1	657	M Wilkins	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	11	6
2	650	P Hossell	1	1	1	1	1	2	8	21	17	7
3	500	H Jagers	1	1	1	2	2	3	11	5	20	10
4	633	J Edwards	1	2	2	3	3	4		9	8	15
5	565	R Smallwood	1	2	3	3	3	4	5		10	16
6	188	S Thompson	3	3	4	5	6	6	6	6	6	27
7	745	N Warren	3	3	4	5	6	6	12	16	13	27
8	323	A Walter	3	3	4	4	6	7	18	4	11	27
9	711	B Welham	2	2	5	5	6	7		10	8	27
10	585	B Herring	4	4	4	5	5	5		12	13	27
11	700	J Windibank	2	3	3	3	4	14	4	3	6	29
12	99	P Luttmann	3	4	5	6	6	7	9	13	10	31
13	707	D Coleman	2	4	5	5	8	8		19	15	32
14	670	P Hayes	1	1	5	6	6	18		18	6	37
15	518	R Ballam	5	5	7	7	8	9		14	11	41
16	762	R Stevenson	5	6	8	8	8	10		28	14	45
17	63	C Rbinson	4	6	8	8	10	10	10	29	10	46
18	641	P Hinde	2	7	9	10	12	13	15	23	8	53
19	117	M Thompson	7	9	11	12	13	13	7	25	7	65
20	50	D Thompson	16	17	17	17	20	21	21	20	7	108

BUILDERS REPORT

It's meant to be a quiet time for boatbuilders, but not Comet Dinghies! Southampton Boat Show was quite rewarding with a Comet, Duo and Trio being sold. The Trio was an ex-demonstrator and was part-exchanged for an ex-demo Duo, he had bought earlier in the year. He has also bought a second-hand Comet and already done an open meeting, that's Comet dedication for you.

We had our demo weekend at Burghfield S.C. near Reading in October for the Southampton enquiries and did very well, especially on Trios, six so far but a Comet and Duo were also sold, the Duo to join two Comet Clubs at Eyott S. C. on a creek off the top of the Crouch. A Comet was recently delivered to Cam S.C. and a second one to Emberton Park S.C. near Milton Keynes.

Back in July six Comet Minos went to Wimbleball S.C. on Exmoor, with help from the Lottery and local authorities etc. This has already resulted in some new Comets, although not new, if you know what I mean, in the club. I'm told the Minos are proving really popular for training whether youngsters or the more mature sailor.

We haven't built any dinghies for a few months now, the Comet, Duo and Trio dinghies at London Boat Show will be the same as were at Southampton, but we've already got about 2 months of work booked for next year. The reason for this apparent madness will be revealed at London in January. **Comet Zero!** (the exclamation mark is an expression of my current excitement! oops there I go again). Incidentally there is a seaside town locally called Westward Ho! which has the exclamation mark as standard.

The Zero is the same length as a Comet, but a bit wider, deeper, heavier but still car-toppable. A stayed mast with a reefable 60 sq ft mainsail and comfy sit-in seats all round. The hull looks fairly traditional with a long centre keel skeg and bilge runners. It has a centreboard rather than a daggerboard. A jib and possibly a small spinnaker are options, as well as oars and an outboard motor.

The market for the Zero is so broad it's frightening, everything from a gentlemans/ladies rather steady single-hander to a suprisingly nippy club racer for a couple of youngsters. As I write we are still making the deck mould, the first two boats will be finished in mid-December, sailed for photos and video sessions, leaflets printed and the boats washed and polished for London. There has been a wooden-decked prototype sailing since August but there will still be lots of testing all Winter with deliveries starting in the Spring. As well as London, we will have a much stronger presence at Sailboat this year so I'm sure I'll see some of you at either show.

Sorry to ramble on, but I'm quite upbeat about the next century. I have a new office manager and a new boatbuilder starting in January. The Comet single-hander continues to sell steadily, the second-hand ones always sell fast and I think the class is entering the next millennium in a strong position. Merry Xmas and Happy New Millennium!!

Andrew Simmons, Comet Builder.

1999 APHELION & ORBITAL REVIEW

At the end of my 1998 review, Alan Browning added the comment "I think Phil Hossell will do very well in 1999". Not quite true! I did reasonably well, but most of all I thoroughly enjoyed the season and the very healthy competition. The main reason we sail is surely because we enjoy it and to actually win or be successful is an extra bonus. I have probably enjoyed some events a lot more where I have not been at the front but have been battling against some tough competition. Remember, after a bad result, it always makes that good result feel so much better. After a race say to yourself "did I enjoy that race?" If the answer is yes (as it is in at least 90% of my races) then you have achieved what you aimed for when you first started to learn to sail. If you don't enjoy it I would recommend giving it up. But we all enjoy our sailing, don't we?

Enough of that! You will be pleased to know that I will try and stay clear of naming any of you as the "hot tips" for the millennium so that you aren't condemned before the season even starts. I must now get on with the 1999 review.

Five members of your committee representatives clocked up the most mileage during 1999. Henry managed an incredible 20 events, a record I believe. Norah, our illustrious Secretary, although not sailing turned up at most venues to make herself known to the people arranging the events and also to familiarise herself with her Road Atlas and to see the type of locations that we get either so much pleasure or pain from. Liz ably supported me on each occasion in attending 17 events, with Derek (the money man) getting to 15 locations. Ros Stevenson treated herself to one of Andy Simmons new Comet Club boats at the start of the season and took it to 14 Open Meetings. Nick Warren, one of our new committee members and also Brian Herring travelled to 13, with Robin Ballam, Mark Wilkins and Annette Walter (with Dad, Phil of course there as driver/coach/boat rigger etc) each managed 11.

Attendances were down a little compared to 1998 with an average of 18 boats attending each meeting. Best supported events were Littleton (again) with 39 boats followed by Banbury and Chipstead with 32 apiece. The circuit for 1999 contained 24 events concluding at Kingsmead SC on 17 October. These 24 events were split into 5 Area Aphelion Travellers Trophies with the best 3 meeting results counting for qualification in each area. (Each area contained 5 meetings with the exception of the Southern Area that only had 4.) Additionally, qualification for the Orbital Trophy required helms to count their best 6 Open

Meeting results, providing that they had entered in either the National or Association Championships.

Just to remind you all, our National Champion by winning the first 6 out of 7 races at Hampton Pier was John Challener (Mudeford), regaining the trophy that he also won at the same venue 2 years previous. John only made one other appearance by winning on home water at Mudeford as well. Debbie Degge (Redditch) made a very welcome comeback in the Comets and similarly won the first 4 out of 5 races at the Association Championships at Staunton Harold to take the title. Like John, she only made one other appearance by winning at Banbury. Let's hope that we see a lot more of you both in 2000.

Western Aphelion

Cotswold Sailing Club was the venue for the final event of the Western Area Aphelion on 24 July. Before the Cotswold meeting, Richard Smallwood (Shearwater), Paul Govier (Sutton Bingham), John Challener (Mudeford) and myself (Merthyr Tydfil) had already achieved one victory apiece, so there was all to fight for in this final event to take the Area Trophy. Paul held the upper hand with the best results before this final event but unfortunately could only come 6th. Richard and I were never apart in all three races but both succumbed to the guile of Henry. However, I just pipped Richard to take 2nd place at the meeting and subsequently retain the Trophy for the third year running. Richard took 2nd spot followed by Paul in 3rd, Henry 4th and Derek Coleman 5th. There were 9 Area qualifiers.

Central Aphelion

With the increase in the number of Open Meetings, new for 1999 was the Central Area Trophy. One new venue, Banbury, had 32 entries for its first open meeting, and Redditch returned to the circuit. Debbie Degge convincingly won the opening event at Banbury with Henry 2nd and Annette Walter 3rd. Henry went on to win Redditch in a closely fought meeting that could have gone to any of 5 helms up to 50 meters from the finish line. Naseby turned into a very windy affair with John Coppenhall bringing the whole family and putting 4 boats on the water. I managed to hit form to win this event along with Aylesbury and Arden to get my name first on this splendid new Area Trophy. Henry took 2nd overall from a very consistent Brian Herring in 3rd and Annette in 4th. 6 helms qualified for the Central Area.

Southern Aphelion

Pingewood SC provided the venue for the final event in the Southern Area Aphelion. Mark Wilkins dominated this Area with victories at Taplow Lake, Hillhead and Pingewood. Jake Sutton was the only other winner at Frensham Pond. Of all the other main challengers, most did not compete in enough events,

but Richard Smallwood was the most consistent of the rest to take 2nd with Brian Welham 3rd in an area that produced 5 qualifiers.

Northern Aphelion

The Northern Area Aphelion was the most open in years as there were five potential winners going into the final event at Redesmere SC on 9 October. It was good to see John Edwards back in top form when he won the opening event at Winsford Flash. Peter Hayes then peaked with victories at Chester and Glossop before he sustained a serious neck injury in an accident at home. Henry then won at Combs. John, Peter and Henry were joined as potential area winners by Steve Heyes and myself to battle it out for the title at Redesmere. Peter was not in his usual prime condition and was unable to maintain a challenge. I came up with victory at Redesmere but John stole the area title from me by taking third place. Peter however came 3rd, with Steve 4th and Henry 5th in an area that produced 10 Area qualifiers. I am sure we all wish Peter a full recovery and all the best for a strong challenge in 2000.

Eastern Aphelion

The Eastern Area Aphelion was the best supported with an average of over 26 boats per event. Guy Wilkins held the early upper hand with victories at Fishers Green and Crawley Mariners. Mark Wilkins took a 2nd at Fishers Green with Brian Welham a 2nd at Crawley. Mark Wilkins then hit back with back to back victories at Chipstead and Littleton. Going into the final event at Kingsmead the Wilkins brothers had both secured 2 wins and a 2nd apiece. The two of them battled hard (literally) throughout this last event only for Mark to come up trumps for the meeting and also the area. Guy was 2nd on the day and also over the series with Simon Thompson taking 3rd on the day and in the area. Annette Walter aided by a 3rd at Fishers Green took 4th spot in an area that produced 13 qualifiers.

Orbital Trophy

There were 20 helms that qualified for the Orbital award. The overall winner was not confirmed until the very last event at Kingsmead SC. With the best 6 events to count, Mark Wilkins and myself had both got 5 victories and one 2nd place, but Mark held the upper hand with a better Nationals result. I had to not only beat Mark but also win the final event, something that Mark had the upper hand in on head to head contests between the two of us. Mark did the necessary as I had a poor result at Kingsmead. Henry Jagers took 3rd overall having won 3 events with John Edwards having an excellent season in claiming 4th spot.

It was good to see Richard Smallwood back on the circuit competing at 10 meetings and taking 5th place overall followed by Simon Thompson in 6th with some consistent results. Nick Warren had an improved season with a couple of 3rd places at Shearwater and Aylesbury to come 7th overall with Annette Walter in

8th having had some memorable results in particular her 4th place at the Association Championships. Well done Annette, you can certainly give even the best a race in the light airs.

Brian Welham had a couple of 2nd places at Crawley and Aylesbury but overall was only able to take 9th place with Brian Herring in 10th after a good set of consistent results. John Windibank would have been higher than 11th if his Kingsmead result had not let him down. John only just qualified with 6 results and was destined to be up with the leaders until that final event. Paul Luttman took 12th place ahead of Derek Coleman in 13th.

Peter Hayes looked set for a good campaign until his accident, but still managed 14th ahead of Robin Ballam who in 15th place also suffered a gashed hand that prevented him attending the National Championships. Ros Stevenson (16th) won the opening race of 1999 at Winsford Flash but did not manage to maintain that form through the season.

Chris Robinson, Paul Hinde and Michael Thompson secured 17th, 18th and 19th places respectively. For all three helms I am sure that they were very disappointed especially with Chris and Paul having shown great improvement signs in 1998, and Michael having performed very well at the National Championships. Unfortunately there has to be someone in 20th and last spot. This year it falls to Diana Thompson, a super lady who always has a go, regardless of conditions and very rarely retires. Well done Di!

Crawley Mariners personnel yet again had top representation with 5 of the Orbital qualifiers. We missed some favourites (Heidi Dodd, Martin Vinson, Jake Sutton, Heather Back, Alex Reeve, Robbie Hamilton to name but a few) who have gone on to other things. Hopefully we will see them soon back on the Comet circuit.

Looking to the future, next year we have the Nationals at Glossop, the Association Championships at Mudeford and a special Millennium event at Chipstead. More details can be found elsewhere in the magazine. Also there are many Open Meetings at our favourite locations. More importantly we need **YOU**, the membership, to support these events. Good sailing for the year 2000.

Phillip Hossell (Comet 650, Evesham SC)

N.E.C. 2000

Once again it's that time of year when we start looking for volunteers to man up the Comet stand at the N.E.C. Caravan, Boat & Leisure Show in February next year.

The Show will run from Saturday 19th February to Sunday 27th February inclusive.

We need a minimum of four people each day, that is two for the morning and two for the afternoon.

Many of you have helped in the past and know what a pleasant day it can be, with plenty of time to look around the rest of the show. Of course you get free parking and free entry, so it's a chance to have a great day out for very little cost, most important these days!

There must be a lot of Comet owners out there who have not yet got involved in this event. Don't be shy, it's very easy and we were all first timers once..

WE NEED AT LEAST 36 VOLUNTEERS TO COVER THE NINE DAYS. To save last minute frantic ringing round in January to fill the gaps, please ring or fax me on 01457 861452 to book the time and day you want, or you can E-mail me on stuart.gilder@sgilder.freeseerve.co.uk

Please have a go. If you have done it before then talk to the ones who haven't and try to get them on board.

Looking forward to hearing from you very soon.

Stuart Gilder. (Comet Class Association Committee)

PERIHELION

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in Early April 2000. **Contributions to me by the end of February please.** Distribution is a few days later than issues at other times of the year because it is deliberately delayed to be after the last day for renewal of membership. If you haven't paid your sub you won't get a Perihelion 54!

Alan Browning, Editor

SCORING, A LETTER TO PHIL HOSSELL

I have been following the discussion on points and scoring and would like to point out a problem which can occur when a sailor who is not a Comet Association Member is deleted from the results. **If his results are deleted from the overall event finishing order this can give a different outcome to deleting the results race-by-race.** Here is an example, four races, three to count, where for simplicity I show only the results of boats A, B and C. B and C are members but A is not.

					TOTAL	POSITION
A	1	1	1	2	3	1
B	3	4	3	1	7	2
C	2	3	2	4	7	3

Deleting the line of A's results, it would seem that B wins on a tie-break.

However, if A's results are removed race-by-race, as they should be, we get:

					TOTAL	POSITION
B	2	3	2	1	5	2
C	1	2	1	3	4	1

and C wins on a points count.

I hope that you are aware of this situation. Regarding points and discards I cannot see any problem as long as it is stated in the sailing instructions and we are all aware what we are doing. It would be nice if all clubs used the same system however.

Jack Thompson (Comet 374, Carsington S.C.)

Editor's note:

Interesting isn't it ! There are two things I feel I must say:

1) The crux of it seems to me to be that, in Jack's example, in the 4th race **A finished between B and C.** The upshot was that C's total went down by 3 points but B's total only went down by 2 points changing an unfavourable tie-break situation for C into a simple points win.

2) We must all be aware that the removal of non-member's results is done by Phil Hossell when he produces the official results for the Aphelions and Orbital. Jack is pointing out that **to do this correctly Phil must have the results of every race, not just the final positions.** If there have been errors like this in the past, I imagine that it is too late to correct them.

A CLASSIC AUTUMN SAIL

The high pressure had been overhead for a while with fronts lining up in the Atlantic and, as the high moved away over Scandinavia, I was rewarded with a clear warm sunny day and a SE 3-4. Time to go sailing, one Friday morning.

I arrived to find the Commodore and Bosun hard at work fixing a door post on the Clubhouse. Luckily the work required no more than two people but my memory of the foundations laid down in 1956 was tested! The old photo in the Clubhouse helped.

Going to rig the boat, I passed an aggressive swan with six cygnets, now quite fully grown, which was a surprise as the entire group had gone missing earlier in the summer. Fears were expressed but perhaps they had just felt like a change of scenery.

Out on the water with a steady wind, a good beat from end to end and a run back down the reservoir. It was a lovely sail with the water to myself but for a handful of fishermen.

Around the reeds were the separate grey shapes of three herons, still in contemplation of fish but, when I passed too near, ready to lumber into the wind with wildly flapping wings and loud in protest. At least they were less disturbed than the few visiting seagulls who never learnt that, if they perched on a mark, I'd be back every few minutes on the next lap to move them!

A quick lunch and out for another hour in a freshening breeze which allowed the boat, to lift onto a gentle plane on the run down and a decidedly wet one on the beam reach across High Bank. My exercise was interrupted for a few minutes as I hove to and watched a grebe trying to feed a small fish to even smaller chicks. I lost count of the times a chick would drop it from its beak while patiently mother retrieved it for another, eventually, successful try. What the fish made of it all was not recorded.

The wind veering now and becoming unstable, time to pack up in a leisurely way and walk back around the bank to look at the autumn colours just tingeing the north bank trees. A fisherman's wife interrupted her reading to call up 'You looked as if you were enjoying yourself'!

Yes I was, forget the racing stuff. sailing rules OK?

However, talking of rules and looking at Perihelion 52, I must say the racing fraternity are getting into a real muddle over scoring and discards when it should be quite simple.

Firstly, for events run by the Class, we can specify any scoring and discard system in SI's. We can not dictate to Clubs for their Opens but many would follow our wishes if asked nicely!

Secondly, if you agree with the following premises, then the old system is still best.

1. Competitors intend to win races and achieving that deserves a bonus.
2. Discards are there to avoid a competitor being prejudiced by accident or the actions of others.
3. Competitors display their competence over all races in a series.
4. If all else fails, an arbitrary decision is best reached using later races where comparative positions are known by competitors.

The following system meets the above:

1. Low points scoring with a bonus for first place.
2. Discards of 1 race in a short series and 2 races in a long series.
3. If races to count produce a tie, best discards decide.
4. If a tie still exists, results from the last race first decide.

Let's remember the old KISS slogan - Keep it simple, Stupid!

Keith Lamdin. (Comet 241, Aylesbury S.C.)

● SCORING & TIE BREAK SYSTEMS

May I firstly compliment Alan (Editor) on his excellent production of outstanding Perihelion newsletters for us Comet Class Association members. The range of topics, interest value and presentation is superb. To compile & produce a publication is no small task and everyone should be proud to have Alan as our Editor. His voluntary efforts are extremely well appreciated. Thank you Alan.

With regards to my articles on Scoring & Tie Break systems, Alan has had to take on considerable extra workloads & frustration at times, due to my 'series' of

letters. The clear misunderstanding & misapplication of the systems warranted explanations. Alan has been very accommodating to me both on telephone & letters, to clarify precisely on what is published to reduce the chance of further misunderstanding arising. He is absolutely correct in this approach.

This subject is very central at all levels of sailboat racing with rule consistency and interpretation being necessary. Simplification with easy understanding is also paramount in any changes. I believe this new "Experimental RYA 1 Scoring" system is the way forward as it is clear & simple to implement and understand. Indeed, this was Alan's view in our final teleconversation just prior to publication of Perihelion 52.

I have noticed in perusing Perihelion results and reports that numerous instances of tie breaks have occurred including Nationals, Class Association Championships & recent Naseby & Merthyr (1st place) Open meetings, not to mention the wider sailing fraternity at local and National/International meetings.

It is really now up to all members, clubs & associations to make their views known, both within their organisations and to RYA, for benefit of race sailing generally with just one standard scoring & tie break system implemented in the future.

Turning to Phil Hossell article Perihelion 52, pages 34/35, I appreciate and thank the Association Committee for considering and responding both direct to me and through Perihelion. My mind is totally at rest as I know how easy it is to be remiss at times. I have no problems with any of the sailing rule changes provided Sailing Instructions are fully & correctly written with all competitors aware before racing begins.

The Shearwater Open result was explained on page 35 and was due to a misprint in the table of results submitted to Perihelion for which I apologise. The half point for a second place dead heat in Race 1 (2 points + 3 points = 2.5 points each) was omitted.

As Phil states, the Comet Class Committee requires your views on Scoring & Tie break systems to enable discussion and recommendations to be tabled for Comet event organisers in the future.

I have stated my views, what are yours?!

John Regnard (Comet 534 & 583, Sherewater S.C.)

WINNERS OF THE 1999 PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

The change in the eligibility rules produced a veritable cornucopia of entries for this year's Photographic Competition for which judging took place after the open meeting at Pingewood.

Now the rules (see Perihelion 51) said "The judging panel to be appointed by the Chairman. Judges will not be eligible for prizes." I also exclude any of my own efforts anyway and try to judge entries without reference to the entrant's name. However, on this occasion and after a brief look, the identities of many of the photographers were all too apparent to me. So I appointed four members I knew had not themselves submitted any photos and "took a walk" as they say while they got on with it. I was not a little surprised with the result!

Norah's action photo of Comets rounding a mark during this year's Nationals wins the Comet Racing category. It is one of several she took from a safety boat. Together with some she has taken at other events this year and considering she has seldom used a camera before I can see we have a new talent to contend with in the future. I suppose she will be wanting a camera of her own before long!

The runner-up for Comet Racing is by Liz Hossell and was taken at the Chester open meeting. Liz continues to provide us with many fine photos and this is no exception.

Alan Browning wins the prize for Comet Fun: a late afternoon shot on a hazy, lazy day. With the sail and sun mirrored in the water, there must be a "Comet" (or "comet") related caption in there somewhere! No runner-up was chosen in this category.

Well done to our winners and thanks to everyone who sent photos to myself or Alan, your entries have provided a higher standard of illustration in Perihelion over this past year than ever before and also helped us with better publicity material. Keep up the good work and hopefully the next lot of prizes will not all go to committee members!

Henry Jagers

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

1. Next year's programme is gradually taking shape. There will be one or two changes to note. For instance, Shearwater will not be holding an open in April - they have a distinct lack of wet stuff since someone pulled the plug out. They hope to have all the repairs done before too long. So, Winsford Flash will be your only opportunity to practise in an Open before the Nationals!

It is possible that Merthyr Tydfil will not be able to host an Open this year. The club has been very disappointed with the attendances over the last few years, and are currently considering the feasibility of putting on an event for one or two visitors. We have two new venues for 2000:

Redoubt, at Hythe in Kent will be on July 22nd. Their whole Comet fleet sailed at this year's Nationals, and several did well at the Civil Service Championships at Netley Cliff.

Carsington, in Derbyshire, is a large reservoir which has a lot of sailing activity. The Open meeting, provisionally booked for August 19th, will be held alongside their usual cruiser racing.

2. The Nationals are at Glossop on 29th/30th April and 1st May. This is not only Mayday Bank holiday, but it also the weekend after Easter, and still in school hols - so why not take a break and head for the High Peak?

3. The Association Championships are at Mudeford on Sat/6th August, which is the first weekend of Mudeford Week.

4. While on the subject of the programme, don't forget the Comet Millennium Meeting at Chipstead on Tuesday 29th and Wednesday 30th August.

5. Someone left a waterproof top at Mudeford earlier this year. Please contact Brian Ward, 01202 482781 to reclaim it.

6. Those of you who read the Daily Mail may have seen the article on 28th September which featured an interview with Stuart and Hilary Gilder. It was good to see them at the Pingewood Open, and Stuart is now back at work. Peter Hayes is also back at work - and sailed in the Redesmere Open, hopefully with no ill effects!

7. Another welcome visitor to Redesimere was Comet 18 which has been languishing in a garage since 1983. There was a lot of interest in her wooden foils and original Banks sail, which looked immaculate.

Norah Gould, Class Secretary

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JAN - MAR 2000

January 7 - 16: London Boat Show, Earls Court
February 19-27: Leisure Exhibition, NEC Birmingham
March 4 - 5: Sailboat 99, Alexandra Palace

Provisional open meeting Programme for April and May 2000.

Sat 15 April Winsford Flash

Sat	29 April	National Championships and AGM, Glossop. Motions
Sun	30 April	for the AGM must be proposed by two full members
Mon	1 May	and submitted to the Secretary in writing by 2 nd April.

Sat 6 May Fishers Green

Sat 13 May. Chester

Sun 14 May Crawley Mariners

Sat 20 May Banbury

When you receive your renewal slip from Derek, in the New Year, you will find a reminder of the early dates on the back of it. The full programme will be available by the middle of February, on request, on the Comet Association website as soon as possible and will be printed in the Spring 2000 Perihelion.

SCORING PUZZLE

I must admit that there was an ulterior motive behind my scoring puzzle (Perihelion 52, page 33), I wanted to help Phil to ensure he did the right thing when including the results of the Glossop meeting in the Aphelion results, you may remember there were three equally placed boats. John Regnard has replied (thank you John) that the answer to my puzzle is that the meeting should be declared void, and he quotes chapter and verse from the RRS rules, but that does not help with the question of the Glossop placings.

The Committee have confirmed that the boats concerned be given equal 4th places, as was shown in the "First Six" results of Perihelion 51.

Discussion on all aspects of scoring is on the agenda for the next Committee meeting and members' comments to aid this discussion are invited. Comments must be in writing, or Faxed, and sent to Phil Hossell by 22nd January, 2000. His address and Fax number are on the inside cover.

Alan Browning, Editor

TALKING TO . . . RALPH ROWE

Alan Browning: Until now our paths have not crossed, except for a recent article you wrote on knots, but I have for some time planned to ask you to contribute to this series. I have been well aware of your reputation for building up the Comet fleet at Chipstead and supporting the open meeting circuit for some years. I'm sure many members will like to hear about your experiences in the early days of the Comet class. Did you sail other boats before the Comet ?

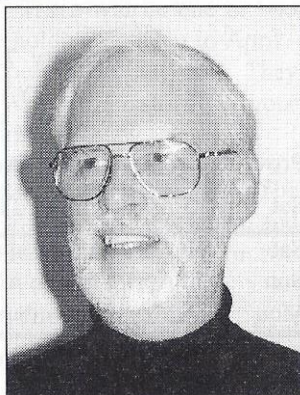


Photo: Anne Browning

Ralph Rowe: I'd really like to go back to square one.

In 1976 I had a Brittany beach holiday with my wife, two teenage daughters and teenage son. I was lying in the sun, bored out of my mind, and my son and I were attracted by a French sailing school. We watched them come down every day, get the covers off, rig the boats, launch them and off they'd go for a couple of hours. They'd come back for lunch for a couple of hours and off they'd go in the afternoon again for another couple of hours and, to cut a long story short, I came back home, ordered a kit for a Mirror dinghy and over the course of that winter built it. In the spring of 1977 I launched the Mirror at Thamesmead and sailed it quite a bit there on a day sailing basis. That year, on holiday, my wife and I took the Mirror down to Dartmouth and sailed in and out of the estuary. We had a wonderful time - never really looked back. In 1979 we joined Chipstead Sailing Club and sailed in the Mirror class there which continued to grow for several years. In 1981 I bought a Topper; that was a growing fleet at Chipstead as well, and like the Mirror fleet, rose in numbers to be over a hundred boats. Then in 1982 my wife and I had a Greek island sailing holiday in Paxos, sailing Wayfarers and Toppers off the beach; that was a stupendous holiday, probably one of the best holidays we'd ever had. Pat and I decided that sailing holidays were wonderful. I can't say how highly I appreciated those Greek island sailing holidays, in Paxos, in Nidri, in Porto Heli and in Ithaca, a place called Frikes. The holidays always had a wonderful atmosphere, nice people and we always learnt something more about sailing. In the first holiday in Paxos we learnt how to sail a Wayfarer, how to rig the spinnaker and everything else. The next time we went to Nidri and learned how to sail rudderless and so on, every time we learnt something. **Alan:** You didn't have to learn Greek ? **Ralph:** No, no, They are always English organised companies. Back home, my children

all learnt to sail with me in the Mirror. So, from 1977 right through to about 1984 my only experience of sailing was in Mirrors and Toppers and I like both of those boats. **Alan:** How did you find the Topper considering your height ? **Ralph:** Uncomfortable to say the least. It's a delightful boat, it's buoyant, its fun, it's unsinkable, all the things they say about it, but in light winds, which we get a lot of at Chipstead, it's difficult to sail because you've got to curl up in a foetal position right up by the mast and it's most uncomfortable.

Alan: Where did you first see a Comet and what attracted you to the boat ?

Ralph: I was a regular visitor to the London Boat Show and saw a Comet there for the first time in 1984. I met Andy Simmons of course and expressed my interest to him, but there was one sticking point which was that at Chipstead new classes of boats had to go into the fast handicap class, which in old money, had a yardstick range of 109-119. The Comet was 124 and they said "well sorry, no". I put a proposal to the club AGM and it was more or less totally rejected, but the seeds were sown and within the next 12 months or so the general committee decided that it would be a good idea to widen the yardstick range to 126, and accommodate all sorts of boats, Solos, Streakers, Lightnings, and other single-handers. Toppers and Mirrors of course sailed as separate fleets, as did Graduates, Herons, Ents, Fireflies, Lasers, Scorpions and OKs. The fast handicap fleet was a real mixture of other boats. **Alan:** Did you buy a Comet at that point or were you just talking about it? **Ralph:** No, I talked to the club officers and once the yardstick range was expanded to potentially admit Comets, I thought I'd look out for a second-hand one. Comet number 30 came up at Tonbridge Sailing Club so I went and bought that in the middle of the summer of 1986 and I took it to Chipstead and in the latter part of the season sailed in fast handicap races and into the winter season as well. People used come up to me and say "that's a nice looking boat, what's that, I haven't seen that before" and made all the usual remarks "what a nice roomy cockpit", "aren't the controls nice and simple" and "it looks good on the water, it's a really attractive boat". Those were my sentiments exactly. Two of us had Comets at that time, myself and Steve Grenville, The following year it went up to five or six because people just liked them, existing club members, new people came in, Andy pushed people from the area towards Chipstead. In 1988 we had about 10, 1989, 16, it was an exponential growth. In that period I used to go to a lot of open meetings and to the Nationals, very often with Chris Sinclair who won the Nationals twice and many of the Opens too, a very good young sailor from a very good sailing family.

And then unfortunately in 1990 I had to go into hospital for an abdominal operation and that really was the break point in my doing Nationals and opens because I had a season off and I got out of the habit. **Alan:** You say you sailed with your wife in the double-handers and then you got a Comet, what did she do ?

Ralph: In the early days we used to sail the Mirror together but the love of her life is riding and she bought a horse. She also found that crewing in a Mirror was an uncomfortable experience; she has had ear-rings whipped off by the kicking strap, so she was not dismayed to give up regular sailing in a two-handed small boat. That's really been the case ever since, I've sailed single-handers and she's done a lot of riding. But the Comet fleet, with the boat's obviously attractive features, grew very, very fast. **Alan:** Did Andy go to Chipstead to give demos? **Ralph:** Oh yes, in those days he came down to Chipstead fairly regularly either to deliver new Comets or to give demos. In those days he was trying to do the whole thing on his own, the Hyltons were not distributing Comets then. **Alan:** Sailing a Mirror at that time you must have met the Wilkins family. **Ralph:** Yes indeed, Guy and Mark were regular and very important Mirror sailors and very good Mirror sailors, Guy had written a book on Mirror sailing and I got friendly with them. **Alan:** They hadn't got their Comets then had they. **Ralph:** No, I believe that it was in about 1989 that Jean Wilkins bought the first Comet in their family.

Alan: I understand you were very influential in stimulating the growth of the Comet fleet at Chipstead. What was it like in those days?

Ralph: The next milestone was when Dave Franklin, who was the fast handicap class captain, said "right, you're over 20 Comets now and I think the time has come to propose to the general committee that the Comets have a class of their own, are you willing to be class captain". I agreed and in 1991 was elected and we had a Comet class. Our fleet was then in the high twenties or even low thirties, and still growing. I saw my role at that time as building up the Comet fleet at Chipstead and I spent the following two years doing that. My two maxims were: 1) communication and 2) togetherness. Now with communication I did a newsletter on my PC every couple of months at least, telling the Class what was going on, in the sailing committee, in the club in general and in the rest of the Comet world. The format was A4, photocopied, just literally a newsletter, usually with a picture frequently drawn using simple software (MS Paint). I tried to keep the fleet informed to keep up the level of interest and involvement. On the togetherness side I organised training sessions on Saturday or Sunday mornings. On a Saturday morning it was an hour or two's sailing, follow-my-leader or anything to get everybody trying to compete with one another, and on a Sunday morning, for an hour before the class racing, we would have a session. These proved to be ever so popular. **Alan:** Did you lead those sessions or did somebody else? **Ralph:** No, I wasn't a good enough sailor myself to lead the sessions but I organised them and tried to encourage sailors from Chipstead who were better than me to lead. I'll never be a brilliant sailor, I started too late in life and I've never devoted enough time to it. In my sailing I don't think I've ever won anything on the open circuit, I have come second in the points series at Chipstead once and third once or twice and so on, and I've enjoyed that immensely, but I'm a middle-

of-the-fleet sailor. I remember a young man called Nicholas Powell who was about 17 or 18 leading some sessions. He was a very good sailor and he gave us the benefit of his wisdom and experience, but everybody contributed something. Gradually the class got more and more competitive and more and more competent. Unfortunately the Wilkins's had too many other commitments of their own (young families and jobs) to get involved in the training very often so we missed out a little bit with their undoubted skill, but nevertheless some of the other sailors were pretty good and our training sessions generally increased the standard within the fleet. By the time I finished being class captain we were up to something like 36 Comets, as I laughingly said "the largest Comet fleet in the world", which it was. That was very, very satisfying. Sadly I had to give up the class captaincy because at the end of 1991 the firm that I'd been working-for went into liquidation. With two others I decided to start a brand new business and I had to put a huge amount of effort into getting that off the ground. I'm pleased to say that that's gone along all right but it required so much of my time that I couldn't really devote enough time to being class captain any more so I passed the mantle on. But it was certainly a keen and enthusiastic class and to this day continues to be so. We've since had very good class captains, we've been lucky there. **Alan:** At that time of course John Windibank was around. **Ralph:** Yes, John was very keen on doing the open circuit and he acquitted himself very well there. In 1992 he became Chairman of the Association.

Alan: Building up the Comet fleet was a pretty satisfying achievement wasn't it?

Ralph: Yes, but I had a lot of support from the people at Chipstead, particularly Dave Franklin who's wife Beverley now sails a Comet. And there were other people. John Shapley was chairman of the sailing committee at that time, and was very supportive and, with the assistance of the club, the attraction of the boat and a lot of help from Andy, and the Hyltons, building up the fleet just went swimmingly. We did start in a very strong position though because at that time the club had something like six hundred and fifty members and a similar number of boats. In a huge club like that it's not hard to see how an attractive boat can establish a foothold and be looked at by plenty of people. **Alan:** Were you involved in all the Comets appearing at Chipstead? **Ralph:** No, a great many of them came without my influence. I think a lot of people had seen Comets either at Chipstead or elsewhere or at boat shows. Andy did a lot of boat shows, he frequently exhibited at the Dinghy Show and the Southampton Boat Show as well as the London Boat Show. He had his map with pins on it showing where all of the fleets were. Andy would say to prospective new owners "Chipstead's near you, they've got a big fleet of Comets, why don't you join Chipstead". It was all a joint co-operative effort really. But I'm sure the same thing happened at other clubs, at Aylesbury for example and at Kingsmead.

Alan: Have you any advice on how to encourage the growth of a club Comet fleet?

Ralph: Keeping the Comets as an enthusiastic and united fleet and keeping up communications within the fleet are the critical factors I think. It's essential that everybody knows what everybody else is doing, everybody knows what's coming up. If you put in the newsletter "by the way there's an open meeting at at so-and-so" or "we've got a club race on such-and-such a day" nobody can say "I didn't realise it was on". **Alan:** What sort of fleet number is a minimum for that to work?

Ralph: Well, at Chipstead we started the fleet at about 20 but we were already dispersing information among the Comet members of the fast handicap fleet before the Comet fleet was formed so I would say probably 15 upwards begins to be an embryonic fleet. **Alan:** I expect some of the Chipstead Comets didn't sail very often. **Ralph:** This is inevitably the case but the thing about the Comets at Chipstead was that because we've got this keenness, the proportion turning out was much higher than in many of the established fleets With only 15 or so boats we'd frequently get seven or eight sailors out whereas some fleets with 30 or 40 boats would also only get at seven or eight sailors out. That spoke volumes when the general committee considered giving the Comets fleet status.

Alan: Have you made any modifications to your Comets?

Ralph: Yes, I have. They're within the rules but I like them and messing about with my boat appeals to me. Anything that comes up in the magazine of that nature I find interesting.

Rubbing strake.

One thing I've done to all my Comets is put a wooden rubbing strake round the edge. I first did this following a nasty accident with Comet 30 where an Enterprise, on port, couldn't stop and I was on starboard and couldn't get out of his way in time. He made a huge vee - shaped notch near the bow which Andy, bless him, repaired in such a way that it was absolutely unnoticeable. After that I put an Iroko rubbing strake all the way round the gunwale. I have done that on both my other Comets since. Iroko is a hard wood rather like teak, and it certainly protects the edge of the gunwale from scrapes and knocks and chips and so on. If the wood ever got badly damaged I could easily replace it. It's bolted on and fixed with silicone rubber sealant just to hold it in place and give it a finished look. It's something that I firmly believe is well worth doing, but very few people seem to do it.

Kicker modification

Another thing that I have done to my present Comet is to modify the kicking strap. It performs the same function as Keith Bullock's device (see Perihelion 29, page 20) allowing the mast to swivel freely, but it does not use a stainless steel ring. (My version is described in this issue, page 34).

Cable ties

I'm a great believer in plastic cable ties, they're incredibly useful. These are the things that have a little buckle and then a long plastic tail you feed through the buckle and they ratchet tight, they're designed for securing electric cables. They're awfully useful for other things such as at the end of a shock cord to stop it fraying or, in my kicker modification, to keep the spreader in position.

I've also replaced the plastic self bailer with a stainless one, with valuable advice from Barrie Hylton.

Alan: Has the standard of sailing Comets changed in the last ten years?

Ralph: It's improved massively. The sailors who were at the front of Chipstead's Comet fleet ten years ago are still sailing well or even better but they are not always at the front now. Some of the younger people have come along and some of the older people with more experience and a more competitive nature have really come to the fore so that the standard of sailing has improved immeasurably. We have our own local yardsticks and the yardstick in fact has come down in the points series at Chipstead.

Alan: Have you used your Comet for anything else but racing?

Ralph: No I don't think I have. When the family was smaller I used to take the Mirror or Topper to the sea but I don't think I've ever done that, other than for a national event or an open meeting, with the Comet. The reason for this is possibly just due to changing circumstances, I mean I'm older than I was, the family have grown up and as I've said earlier we've tended to have quite a number of these superb Greek island sailing holidays. **Alan:** Have you been on any sailing holidays since you've had the Comet? **Ralph:** Oh yes. There was that one at Frikes in Ithaca. Frikes is a "high wind centre" and I found that the boats they'd got were all a bit too hairy for me, under the conditions. Pat and I spent most of the time sailing Toppers again, but in the Med you know it's lovely. We also sailed 420s at Porto Heli, going right over to the beautiful Spetse island. But the last was at Nidri where we had a Wayfarer on independent hire and made several inter-island cruises.

Alan: I notice that when the wind blows hard only about a dozen people in the country seem to be able to handle the "full size rig" Comet well. Do you think the Comet is over-canvased ?

Ralph: I can't handle the Comet in strong, shifty winds, I make no bones about it, the full size rig in anything much over force four is more than I can really cope with. If it's a really steady four I can come to terms with it but if its gusty, which it invariably is on inland water, and shifty, then I have great difficulty with it. A couple of weekends ago it was blowing about a five shifting probably 30 degrees

either way and gusting like mad and I realised I was totally out of control and very carefully made my way back to the pontoon and gave up. However, on that particular day only five or six of us started and only two finished, the conditions were too strong for a Comet. But in my opinion the Comet is a superb inland water boat and in light air, which we get a lot of at Chipstead, it still gives you a reasonable sail, a reasonable race and in my book that's great. I think the boat is just right for what I bought it for, sailing in generally light winds on inland water and in a three or a four you're planing like mad, it's beautiful, it's a wonderful boat.

Alan: We now have the Mino rig available. Officially it's not a Comet because the sail regulations are not met but it has an estimated Portsmouth number for handicap racing. How do you think the Mino should fit in with the Association?

Ralph: We had a Mino rig on loan from Comet Dinghies at Chipstead for some time but I never actually tried it, partly because for most of the time it was there the winds were fairly light and I sailed with the full rig quite happily. One youngster sailed with it regularly but whether it was his skill or whether it was the rig I don't know, but he didn't really measure up, he was always near the back. How the Mino might fit in the Comet Class? That's a difficult one because it's difficult to sub-divide a class in class races, although having said that the Lasers manage to do it. **Alan:** I think what happens at Frensham is that if you have both a Radial and a standard Laser you have to specify what you're going to do. You can either sail with the rig of your choice at the standard Laser handicap or, for handicap races, you specify, before a series begins, which rig you will be using. If you do that you sail at the appropriate handicap. That sounds very fair to me.

Ralph: That sounds fair to me too. **Alan:** The only people who might not think that allowing free choice of rig is fair are the people who think that the Mino rig in strong winds is sufficiently advantageous that it's unfair to those who don't possess one. **Ralph:** Yes, I can understand that but I think that in strong winds the good sailors will cope up to the point where it's totally impossible to sail the boat with any rig on. The people who will buy the Mino rig are those who do it either for weight, skill, mobility or cruising considerations and who don't want such a powerful sail. Now that may give them an advantage in stronger winds, fine. If Comets and Minos are all sailing on the same handicap then I don't have a problem with it, I don't see any difficulty.

Alan: The real crux seems to be should Minos be allowed to join in open meetings and the Nationals. That's what happened in 1996, Tony Thomas from Glossop joined in the Nationals there in his Mino. In club races Glossop S.C. allowed him to sail with whichever rig he feels is appropriate to the conditions without change of handicap. The club was happy with that, but the Comet Class Association wasn't. **Ralph:** Did the rig give him any dramatic advantage? **Alan:** No, he came about 24th out of 30 and his results had to be omitted from the list because his boat wasn't strictly a Comet but I think

Andy's original idea was that Minos ought to be able to join in regardless. **Ralph:** And I would support that. **Alan:** Some of the top sailors don't agree. There's something they don't like about it. **Ralph:** Well I suppose it's the purity of a one-design class, it's allowing a second design, but I think, looking at the practical realities of it, your top-flight sailors won't want to buy a Mino just to be able to win a race in exceptionally strong wind: they will do that with the standard rig. I think I agree with Tony and Glossop that the choice between the Mino or Standard rig should be allowed to be made by the helmsman to suit the conditions. If you reef a Comet that alters the sail characteristics so dramatically it just doesn't really provide great benefit in my view, but on the other hand if you have a boat which has got a halliard, where you reef round the boom, then you can maintain the sail characteristics more or less but reduce the sail area. That's exactly what a Mino rig is doing.

Alan: Have you any comments on the sails made by the different manufacturers ?

Ralph: My first Comet, number 30, had a Banks sail. Then I bought Comet 265 new, which had a Morrison. Later I bought a new Morrison sail and my present boat, Comet 346, which I bought second-hand, also came with a Morrison sail. Comet 30 seemed to perform perfectly well but at that time I didn't have a lot of experience with Comets. My second sail for Comet 265 was undoubtedly better than the original and when I changed from 265 to 346 I kept that second sail. It performs better than the sail which came with 346, so I firmly believe that there is a difference between Morrison sails. The difference has to be to do with shape, but how it is I don't know. **Alan:** Better in what kind of wind? **Ralph:** Generally speaking there's not a lot of difference in strong winds but the sail I bought in its own right performs better in lighter winds than the other two, it just has a nicer shape, you can control the shape better. **Alan:** Have you any comments on the Hyde sail? **Ralph:** I haven't tried one, I'm quite happy with the Morrison sail, when I'm in the right mood I sail reasonably well.

Alan: Have you any thoughts on ways the Committee can help Comet sailors more, in particular non-racing owners?

Ralph: Let me ask you a question, do non-racing members of the Comet fleet join the Class Association ? **Alan:** I know of a few, by that I mean about two or three. One of them wrote an article about what he did on the sea but since then he's sold his boat. **Ralph:** Oh, shame. **Alan:** Some people have suggested a meeting, at a club, even an inland club, where you're not racing but you do things, like sail around and have cream teas or whatever, but I can't imagine that. **Ralph:** I can imagine a fun regatta where you lob half filled squash bottles into the water and go and catch them, play tag on the water or something like that, but it's the racing fraternity who involve themselves with that sort of thing because they have so much more automatic control of their boats and the non-racing sailor will drift

around. But we're lucky at Chipstead in one way, there's a lot of bush and tree cover around the edges and we get a lot of wildlife, we can sail around the fringes in the early morning and see kingfishers and herons and an abundance of wading and swimming birds. That's delightful but there's a limit to the amount you want to do that. **Alan:** Yes, Frensham's like that too. I remember at an Inland championship at Staunton Harold a treasure hunt was planned, where things like bottles of wine were spread around the edge of the lake and you sailed your boat to pick them up but the weather was so windy that they did it on land in the end, without the boats. So that failed. **Ralph:** Shame. **Alan:** There are clubs that have week or weekend holidays where they take all sorts of boats and they have regattas and vague handicap races of a humorous nature, or they go to the Isle of Wight and explore creeks but I don't think there are enough non-racing Comets to get together and do that sort of thing. **Ralph:** Events like that can be so controlled by the weather, you get either flat calm or excessive wind or heavy rain or a thunderstorm and a lot of people won't want to go out, particularly if they're casual sailors. I think the Committee can only really help non-racing Comet sailors by use of the magazine, by printing the experiences of other non-racing sailors, the circumstances under which they use the boat, how many people, how much gear and stuff they put in it and so on. Other than that I don't think the Committee can do a great deal for them. **Alan:** I try to do my bit with the "Customising your Comet" series. Some of the ideas put the boat out of class but might be useful for people who don't race, they can do what they like with their boat. **Ralph:** Publishing the magazine in my view it is one of the most important things, communication again, I think it's vitally important, it keeps you aware of what other clubs are doing, it keeps you aware of what other individuals do. It keeps you aware of technical items which are always interesting, I think because most Comet sailors sail competitively, things like the Keith Lamdin articles on both sailing technique and on the rules are very important and very interesting. The casual sailor can learn from them too.

Alan: Have you any suggestions for things the Comet Class Association is not doing but could do?

Ralph: I'm devoid of new ideas, there are only so many things that it can do. I think that if there's anything that could be done, maybe it could be in the area of training, because we can all benefit from learning better skills from other people. Why is it the top people go just that smidgen faster and end up half a lap ahead at the end of the race. I don't know, but I've got an inkling, having watched the Wilkins's with the scales that they have on their boats. They tweak them here and tweak them there, those little tweaks make a difference. But their other skills, spotting wind shifts and so on and so forth, course decisions which are very critical and very difficult to make, all contribute to them being at the front. Anything that can be done in that area which will encourage those at the back to

come forward I think is going to be helpful, because nothing breeds success like success. If you're always going round at the back and then all of a sudden you're last but two and then you're last but four and then you're in the middle, you think "Wow, I'm doing something right, I want more of this". That's about all I can think of now, training. I think the Committee does a superb job. It's an onerous job, I've been involved in a lot of committee activities in other walks of life and I know how much goes on behind the scenes, it's the iceberg syndrome, you see 10% and the other 90% per cent is happening behind the scenes. I admire what they do immensely.

Alan: You've been talking about communication. We've got a Class Association website on the Internet now, have you any thoughts on that ?

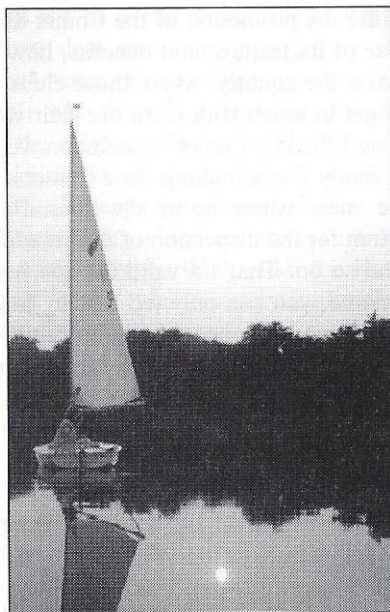
Ralph: I think it's a very exciting thing. It's the up and coming thing without a doubt, I think anything we can do to get the Comet promoted in the sales sense is to be encouraged. **Alan:** You'd have thought it might be worth Andrew Simmons having a website. **Ralph:** Absolutely, but he probably has not got time even to think about it. I guess he could have a quite comprehensive website designed for promoting the Comet for probably half the cost of a Comet. For the Internet, the essential things I think are the promotion of the Comet dinghy, the promotion of sales, the graphic expose of its features and benefits, how popular it is, the clubs that have got them all over the country, where those clubs are, how many Comets they've got and how to get in touch with them via their website addresses. Much of this is already on Tony Ellison's Comet Association website. That sort of thing would be great for somebody who's looking for a Comet and wondering if he can join a club somewhere near where he or she lives. Beyond that there is the Internet's use as a medium for the dispersion of information such as the results of opens and Nationals and so on. That's a valid use too but I don't know to what extent it will be appreciated, you can only tell that by logging the visits that the site gets. **Alan:** I can imagine some people might want to find out open meeting results before they come out in Perihelion to see how they're getting on in an area of the Aphelion. They could find out how well they've got to do at the next meeting, the only person who really knows that now is Phil Hossell, who collates all the results.

Alan: What do you think we should aim for in the future, the balance between the Internet and the Perihelion booklet?

Ralph Right now the Internet is growing like mad but so are book sales. I don't think the Internet will replace the printed word completely, for whilst your electronic searching on the Internet can be fast and worldwide, there is a lot of paraphernalia attached to it, you've got to go to your PC, boot it up and make your search, all very conscious decisions. Books are narrower in scope but very convenient, you can pick up a book, read a page and put it down again. I think a

lot will depend on what proportion of people regard the Internet as their primary source of information. At the moment I don't think a great many people do, they go to newspapers, reference books, even Ceefax. I think that for a long time to come there's going to be a place for Perihelion and I think that the role of the Internet, certainly at the present time, is best seen as a means of promotion of the Comet dinghy, the Comet Class Association and the clubs that support it. **Alan:** For articles giving opinions on Comet topics we'd need a more restricted circulation than the Internet. **Ralph:** You can have restricted access now on the Internet. I belong to a trade association and if you use the appropriate pass-word you can get into a part of their website which has the minutes of meetings and all sorts of things like that. That can be done, right now.

Alan: Well, thanks Ralph for visiting us today and for our most interesting chat. It has certainly helped me to think more about where the Association is heading for in the future and as usual I've learnt something from it. Thanks too for your version of the kicker modification. I think our cat, Tibby, enjoyed it too, he's been on your lap nearly all the time!



Photographic competition: Winner, Comet Fun

Suggested title: "A relaxing sail in September"
(Anne Browning trying out Alan's Comet for
the first time at Frensham Pond in 1991)

EDITOR'S NOTES

Membership renewal time has come round again! As last year there is an un-numbered page for you to remove and send to the Treasurer, and the Committee have asked me to include, as last year, a comments sheet on the back. So more comments please! Also you will find the Nationals entry form there too, another removable page. Those pages are in the centrefold, between pages 20 and 21.

My “Talking To . . .” interview this time is with Ralph Rowe, who in the early days was the king pin of the Chipstead Comet fleet. You will find that I figure more in the conversation this time, I have done this because Ralph contributed greatly to some questions which are very pertinent to the future of the Association, eg building a club fleet; how the Mino should fit in; sail manufacturers; helping non-racers; training and the use of the Internet. My remarks to some extent complement Ralph’s interesting comments. Ralph also contributes his design for a kicker system with cleat off the deck. (page 34).

Tony Ellison brings us up to date with his website (page 5) which I refer to as the “Comet Association website” and we have another excellent review of the season’s racing by Phil Hossell (page 10). Keith Lamdin does a bit of non-racing sailing and both he and John Regnard talk about scoring systems. Please think about what they say, you will find that they are not saying the same thing.

Some people may expect some kind of celebration of the year 2000 in this issue. As I have mentioned, Ralph and I looked to the future in our chat but it does seem an appropriate time to bring out an article (page 38) which I wrote in 1993 just after I became Editor. Keith Bullock had written an article about his Comet modifications (Perihelion 29), concluding with a joking reference to him working on a trapeze for the Comet. I responded and sent him my “tongue-in-cheek” article in a similar vein, extending the “anything goes” idea into the next century using things I knew about from my work background, aircraft. I sent it to a few people but at that time I didn’t think it was appropriate to print it in Perihelion, but I offer it now for your entertainment and your own pondering on the future. The reference to Diana relates to Diana Thompson’s article on bad language on the water (Perihelion 28) and the imagined date of the article, 2023, simply means that I looked forward 30 years. My message was of course, like that of Keith Lamdin’s article on page 16, “Keep It Simple, Stupid”, the simplicity of the Comet being my main reason for choosing it from the available single-handers.

Alan Browning, Editor

CUSTOMIZING YOUR COMET - 5

Two more items, these are from Ralph Rowe (Comet 346, Chipstead S.C.)

(The item numbers relate to the complete "Customizing your Comet" series and 'code A' means that both items are within class rules.)

Rubbing strake (Item 42, code A)

I think that fitting a wooden rubbing strake to the gunwale is very worthwhile to protect the edge from knocks and scrapes. It is specifically allowed in class rules (rule 13a) though few people have fitted one. Mine is made of iroko wood screwed on with M5 stainless nuts and bolts at about 250mm intervals to the gunwale, with silicone rubber adhesive acting as a gap filler.

Modified kicker with jamming cleat above the deck (Item 43, code A)

This is a version of the system devised by Keith Bullock (see Perihelion 29, page 20) but not using a stainless steel ring which members might find it difficult to obtain. The idea is that the whole kicking strap assembly rotates with the mast and is independent of deck fittings. This seems to me to be so fundamentally sound that it was a must for me. Admittedly the 'racing rig' improves the situation in one way, ie. as the mast turns, the amount of tightening of the kicker is reduced due to the greater mechanical advantage compared with the standard kicker.

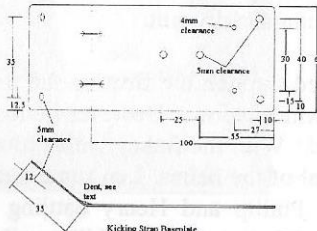
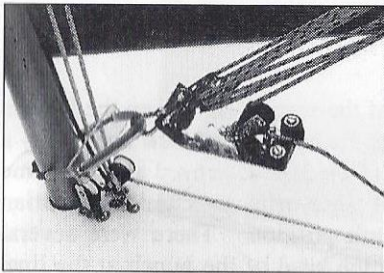
The other 'problem' is hardly affected - that is, as the boom is pushed out, increased tension on the kicker tends to pull it back in again, especially in light air. The Keith Bullock breakthrough was to install a sub-chassis fitted to the kicking strap, with all the blocks and cleat necessary for kicker adjustment mounted on it. I did not copy Keith directly because I could not buy a stainless steel ring from South London chandlers. What I did was to modify the standard rope strop with a spreader, held in place with plastic cable ties on the strop, and to continue to use the pvc tubing as normal. The spreader is not perfect but comes close. It avoids the downhaul and outhaul, which are still fixed to the deck, getting pinched by the strop as the mast turns.

My kicker chassis is fitted to the strop with a snap shackle and the other end of the kicker is shackled to the boom. I have a 4-sheave block at the boom end and a 3-sheave block with a rigid central becket at the chassis end. Saddles mounted either side of the chassis, back-to-back carry this block and the snap shackle. The free end of the kicker rope passes from the upper block to a small block mid way along the chassis and thence through a saddle (which directs it) to the clamcleat. All the blocks are ball race type.

The chassis would ideally be made from 2mm stainless sheet but I could not get any, so I used two thicknesses of 1 mm. (I previously tried 6mm polycarbonate sheet but under the pressure of the nuts and bolts it suffered 'star cracks' and eventually fractured). The two thicknesses of ss were held together during machining by the bolts which later went into attaching the saddles and cleat. Finally, the end of the chassis was bent at about 40 degrees to the main part and to avoid the bend getting more, or un-bent, I put a couple of dents across it using a cold chisel and block of wood.

Polycarbonate sheet can be bought as offcuts from any glazier who does security and 'bandit proof' glazing. Stainless steel sheet can usually be bought from a sheet metal dealer or from a panel maker or the like. The block liberated from the deck by this concept may be used on the chassis. I use the saddle that held it as the anchoring point for the tails of my pulley assisted downhaul arrangement. The jamming cleat freed-up is useful for securing the free end of the painter, after taking several turns round the trolley handle when the boat is on its trolley.

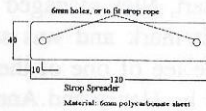
If anyone tries my approach I hope they find it as satisfactory as I have done. Please 'phone me on 0208 777 8650 for a copy of the drawing.



Kicking Strap Baseplate
 Material: 2mm stainless steel or 1mm
 stainless dished - see text
 Dimensions are, not to scale



**Kicking Strap Baseplate
 with fittings attached**



Strap Spreader
 Material: 6mm polycarbonate sheet

● PINGEWOOD OPEN

LAST MEETING OF THE SOUTHERN APHELION

Pingewood S.C. hosted the fourth and last meeting of the Southern Aphelion on September 26th. With a light west to north westerly blowing, the helms' main challenge was finding consistent wind on a lake where the islands and trees create an individual weather pattern. The challenge for the OOD, Geoff Crabb, was to find a course which had wind but no weed.

The early placings in the first race indicated that the previous day's training (and opportunity for familiarization with the lake) had paid off, with Henry Jagers and then Phillip Hossell leading the pack. However, they both found a hole at the start of the second lap allowing Mark Wilkins to take the next mark first. He held on to the lead, while a battle ensued between Henry and Len Dean for second place; a battle which Len won. This showed remarkable skills from Len, who was defending his Pingewood title. Having been over the line seconds before the gun, he turned back, and promptly found a wind shadow which ensured that he was last over the line. Derek Coleman and Nick Warren gave the spectators a treat with a very close finish (shades of Shearwater! Ed.). Gordon Purdy, the sole representative from the host lake, gave everyone a fighting chance by starting late after donning his dry suit.

Nick sailed through the fleet on the first lap of the second race when the leaders found a windshadow. However he lost out on the beat when Mark opened up a good lead. With the flukey winds round one of the islands proved a testing time for several of the helms, Len came out in third place, with Annette Walter, Brian Welham, Phillip and Henry battling for fourth position. There were several changes of fortune before Phillip sailed in at the head of the bunch at the line. During the race, the mark at Gap floated away, and Gravel inverted, which caused some consternation to the helms, and resulted in some boy-scout repairs being effected by the OOD team.

Mark decided to rest on his laurels for the final race. Even though a squall blew through at the start, Nick managed to find a hole on the startline, found the best wind to the first mark and was second round the second mark - only to sail backwards in the lee of one of the Islands. Phillip took the lead where he was soon challenged by Henry and Annette, with Chris Robinson once again fighting to stay with them. Annette fought her way into the lead and came over the line ahead of Henry and Phillip.

It was good to see Bert Stevens from Island SC on the water - not in his Comet but in the rescue boat, wielding his camera. On the down side, a couple of boats took in water when he went by in haste to get the best shot!

Results:

- 1 657 Mark Wilkins Chipstead
- 2 500 Henry Jagers Staunton Harold
- 3 626 Len Dean Kingsmead
- 4 323 Annette Walter Welwyn Garden City

Mark Wilkins won the Southern Aphelion.



“Reflections at Pingewood”
(Phil Hossell and Annette Walter)

(Photo: Bert Stevens)

“DEVELOPMENT OF MY COMET”

I'd like to tell you how my Comet foil number 1984 has developed in the last 10 years since I bought it on April 1st 2013.

It seemed to me that a few things were missing at first. The first thing I did was to throw away that old cloth sail and replace it with the flexible duralumin foil, with the internal hydraulic jack system to ensure that the shape is always just right. Of course I had to add leading edge slats to improve the lift, but that didn't work too well because of interference with the mast, so in the end the mast had to be integrated with the foil. The result is most pleasing, and works very well now, even better since I've added the computer control to the hydraulics. The adhesive for the number gave a bit of trouble with the boundary-layer flow so I've had the number sprayed on now.

The enhancements to the boat itself are few, there's not a lot that can be done since the hulls were changed in 1998 from fibreglass to pressed stainless steel. Most of my improvements are to help me sail it with less effort and more efficiency. First I needed communication with my manager and tactician, so that meant a hands-free telephone, I contemplated a video-phone, but thought that we see each other's faces often enough! I could not do without the fax though, for him to give me tactical diagrams and weather data while I'm sailing. I don't have to reach for the sail controls any more, my DVI (direct voice input) system can recognise my voice, even despite the wind and water noise, to control the electric actuators.

Another very useful thing has been the inertial navigation system, with its map-type display. This shows at all times my position on the sailing area and of course a very useful spin-off is my true boat speed, so that I know when I am at the maximum speed for the conditions. I've done better than that recently, linking up with my on-board computer which can show me, on a very natty display, my speed made good to windward, very useful for ensuring that beating is at its most efficient.

I used to have an audio warning system for heeling angle, a low tone, almost inaudible, when upright, rising to a high-pitched squeal at 60 degrees. This was rather old-fashioned though and I've replaced it with a fully automatic heel control system, with a gyro sensing the heeling, actuating a laterally moving weight to keep the heeling to a low value at all times, except for the fully programmed roll-tacks, which go to never more than a degree or so past the optimum heeling angle.

Steering my boat is easy too. With the radio beacons now mandatory on all racing marks, I have multi-channel DME (distance measuring equipment), so not only can I lock my automatic system to steer me to the marks, even the windward marks, I always know very accurately how far away they are, and a warning bell rings at the 2-length distance. My computer can of course work out my optimum course, sensing the wind shifts by correcting the apparent wind direction (the old faithful burgee with directional sensor) by the true course, though sometimes my manager over-rides the computed course. He usually talks to me about this, he could put changes direct into my computer, but I tend to get confused and irritated when he does.

Regarding tactics in the races, I use a digitally displayed radar, with the data fed to my inertial navigator, so my map of the sailing area includes not only my position and the marks, but all the other boats as well. I have had to install another, rather bigger computer for this (well, bigger in power and storage, it still is only about the same size as the old one, about as big as an egg cup). The programming includes full conflict prediction, developed from the old air-traffic control systems. With this I can see when I might be on a collision course with any other boat and on the display my rights are shown, and if I do not have right-of-way, a course correction is automatically initiated at the right time. I have not yet installed a loudspeaker and speech generator to call "starboard", "water", or a polite "get out of the way Diana" but I will when I can afford it. So far my improvements have only cost me about £1,750,000, give me time, one day it will be cost-effective.

After some horrible experiences in races I have been forced to fit a four-channel video recorder, with fish-eye lens cameras and switchable image intensifiers for night use, to ensure that if another vessel thinks I am in the wrong, I have recorded visual evidence to clear my name. This has necessitated also a recorder to be added to the inertial navigation display, with a common time-scale, not a cheap item.

With my equipment on board, it does not matter whether it is day or night, rain or shine or foggy, the sailing is so easy that all I have to is to monitor that all is going to plan.

In fact, in steady wind conditions, the thing is such a doddle that last week I installed an entertainment system so I can watch my favourite videos, things like the Wizard of Oz or reports of those round-the-world dinghy races with sailors who can afford much better equipment than I've got. But, honestly, sometimes I think, when it gets that boring, I should somehow wangle an inflatable dummy to look like me, and I could let the boat get on with it. I could retire to the bar and, being owner, still collect the prizes.

Captain P.I.Lot (Super Efficient Airlines S.C., Comet 1984)

(Apologies to any Comet sailors who are airline pilots, but they will know that all of this technology exists now, maybe not small enough for a Comet, and the power requirements might be excessive. Much is already used in the big ocean yachts, but with satellite navigation rather than inertial. If you think about it, I have really only been cataloguing the things that the helmsman has to do, without any aids beyond the brain and the senses, when sailing a boat as simple looking as the Comet. I've missed out a lot too, all that stuff about the flow over sail and foils to start with. To me, trying to do all that, and getting a good feeling whizzing along at the same time is what sailing is all about, and provided the boats are near enough the same, it's all there, there's plenty to do ! Let's keep the boat simple, get it right and tighten up the rules to suit! Though we might be the only dinghy class that does !).

Editor's note: I wrote this, including the postscript, in October 1993 and I hope you find it entertaining. How it came about is explained in my Editor's notes on page 33.

Dinghy Leisure

01494 863082

Comet repairs and refurbishments

Barrie Hylton
6 Wychwood
Little Kingshill
Great Missenden
Bucks HP16 0EJ

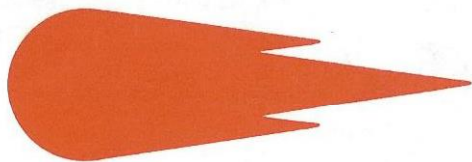
Dinghy Leisure
SERVICES

**APOLOGY TO JOHN EDWARDS
FROM THE COMMITTEE**

For those people who attended the final Northern Area Meeting at Redesmere on 9 October 1999, you will notice that the results published elsewhere in this edition of Perihelion do not correspond with the prizes awarded on the day. Only 2 people were affected, John Edwards from Chester and myself. I am very embarrassed to admit that after awarding myself first place and John the runner-up spot, I was horrified to find that when re-checking the calculations the following day that John should have been awarded the Northern Area Aphelion Trophy.

I have offered my sincere apologies to John, and like the true gentleman that he is, he has accepted them. By the time that this article is published, John should be in possession of the trophy. For all of you who do not know John, he carries out the Auditing of our Accounts and also came fourth in the Orbital this year. Once again, I am sorry John, but never fear I will try to regain the trophy next year, "legitimately".

Phillip Hossell (Comet 650) on behalf of the Comet Class Association



Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association