

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 57
WINTER 2000/2001

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Cover picture: Reflections on the Chipstead Millenium event.

(Photo: Sue Wilson, Comet 685)

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The past year has seen a full and excellent Comet programme: Open Meetings, Championships, Millennium Regatta, training sessions; exhibitions; help and advice to members and potential members; four issues of this splendid magazine; new Association badges and car stickers. Something for everyone and anyone interested in Comets and sailing, racing and cruising alike. Of course, we can't force you to get the best from your sailing, nor to come along for the social side, nor to enjoy the lasting friendship and warming sense of involvement engendered by taking part in, helping to run, or just coming to spectate or chat at events, or helping out at exhibitions, etc., or simply writing a letter or article for Perihelion. We can't force you, but you don't know what you're missing. It is your Association, make full use of it!

A full roundup of the Aphelion and Orbital series can be found elsewhere in this edition, also some notes on the two new venues we enjoyed so much and hope will have us again. Suffice for me to say that I went to most of the events but I hope the three clubs I missed visiting will excuse my absence. Even I have other things to do at the weekend: occasionally! There is a lesson here for other competitors, though. There was close competition at all events and, yes, I did do very well this year, on a par with my 1991 successes. But as I said, competition was close and the overall results could have been quite different if one or two of you had persevered and done just one or two more events. You know who you are!

We are already finalising arrangements for 2001 and it looks like being another excellent programme. The "Forthcoming events" section has some of the key dates so you can start planning your holidays now and I will be producing my usual Programme Card to go out to members with the spring Perihelion. Get your subscriptions in as early as possible to secure your copy!

With sailing over for a couple of months we move to the exhibitions: the National Boat Caravan and Leisure Show at the NEC near Birmingham (17th - 25th February), and SailBoat at Alexandra Palace in London (3rd - 4th March). Over the years these have become much more than just opportunities to promote the Comet and our clubs and to persuade newcomers into our sport, though they are certainly that, but a chance for members to meet each other, work together, and enjoy a day out with a difference. If you can help in any way or have any suggestions as to how we could improve our stands then please get in touch. Paul Hinde will be organising helpers for the NEC show this year and Nick Warren is to set things up at SailBoat. I hope to see many of you at both these shows.

Finally a personal thank you to the rest of the committee and to anyone else who has helped in any way over the past year. And to you all for taking part.

We have celebrated the year 2000 in good style. Let's go forward into 2001, which many consider the real millennium year, with equal enthusiasm and hope. And may the Comet rise!

A very Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year to you all.
Good Sailing,

Henry Jagers, Chairman

2000 PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION - THE RESULTS

Many thanks to everyone who sent in photos for the competition and for use in Perihelion, we had a lot to choose from. Most were from the open and championship events but there were very few suitable for the "Comet Fun" category. This coming year it would be good to have some from your normal club sailing and from your holidays too.

Comet Racing - The unanimous choice was this photo taken by Michael Cohen shortly after a start on the first day of the Nationals at Glossop. Lots of Comets, lots of action. A very useful shot for exhibition use. This was published in PH55 which also had another of Michael's photos on the cover.

Runner-up was a very fine black and white print by Walter De'Ath. A real photographer's photo this one! You've seen it before, on the cover of PH54, and I hope you'll see it again on our exhibition stands.

Comet Fun - Winner, our Hon Secretary, Norah Gould. This photo of two youngsters messing about in a boat had great appeal for all the judges.

Runner-up, Norah Gould, again. I have taken the unusual step of awarding her the second prize too for her shot of a hapless, but I think happy, sailor investigating the reeds at Aylesbury. I hope no one objects, Chairman's unbiased (?) decision and a very small reward for all her work. Besides, we had no other entries in this category!

FIRST SIX AT THE OPEN MEETINGS

SOUTHERN AREA

Littleton

- 1 549 M Vinson
- 2 700 J Windibank
- 3 188 S Thompson
- 4 711 B Welham
- 5 314 H Dodd
- 6 750 R Smallwood

WESTERN AREA

Arden

- 1 168 S Lemmon
- 2 500 H Jagers
- 3 633 J Edwards
- 4 650 P Hossell
- 5 460 M Govier
- 6 585 B Herring

CENTRAL AREA

Staunton Harold

- 1 670 P Hayes
- 2 500 H Jagers
- 3 750 R Smallwood
- 4 374 J Thompson
- 5 323 A Walter
- 6 532 J Coppenhall

Kingsmead

- 1 711 B Welham
- 2 625 A Best
- 3 518 R Ballam
- 4 585 B Herring
- 5 117 M Thompson
- 6 188 S Thompson

Merthyr Tydfil

- 1 500 H Jagers
- 2 419 P Govier
- 3 460 M Govier
- 4 650 P Hossell
- 5 183 M Gingell
- 6 344 N Boarder

Pingewood

- 1 636 I Coppenhall
- 2 650 P Hossell
- 3 700 J Windibank
- 4 711 B Welham
- 5 500 H Jagers
- 6 532 J Coppenhall

NORTHERN AREA

Redesmere

- 1 650 P Hossell
- 2 670 P Hayes
- 3 500 H Jagers
- 4 633 J Edwards
- 5 100 S Bellamy
- 6 643 K Appleby

Note: These results are those that count towards the Traveller's Trophies. Results accrued by sailors who were not members of the Association at the time of the meetings are omitted.

EDITOR'S NOTES

This, the Winter issue, heralding the real start of the new Millenium, includes the final results and open meeting reports of the 2000 season and also the review by Phil Hossell, as usual immaculately presented.

Since I became Editor in 1993 there have been 8 National Championships and, as my contribution to the Millenium, I have made a review of them (see page 22) to try to highlight some achievements in those years, not only by the top sailors but also by those in the middle and lower parts of the Comet fleet. The amount of information is what statisticians would call a "small sample" but I have done my best to obtain some objective conclusions. If anyone thinks they can do better - - - feel free!

This lot makes this issue very heavy on racing and I felt that some non-racing articles were needed to balance it up. Not having received anything from members by mid-November, I wrote a couple of articles taking off my "Editor" hat and putting on my "member" hat. One is an appreciation of the Comet as a non-racing boat and the other an appreciation of a training day that I attended. Then, to my delight, Norah Gould took off her "Secretary" hat and sent me two articles (pages 11 & 20), giving us some thoughts on her travels to Comet events and a personal view of the Millennium Regatta. I've found room to include all four articles. And I've made the cover "non-racing" too, - - - with a photograph from Sue Wilson. Thanks Sue.

There have been no contributions on the Mino, so no Mi-notes. My chin wag with members of Crawley Mariners Y.C. has not been possible yet, but is still in the plans. In a nice little article, Derek Coleman, our Treasurer, encourages us to visit the SailBoat show in early March (page 13).

E-mail

Apologies for Tony Ellison's email address on the inside cover, which has been incorrect in recent issues, but which is correct now. I hope this has not caused you trouble. Note also that it is now possible to send things to me, indirectly I might add, by Fax or e-mail. Give me a ring if you want to do either.

Membership renewal time has come round again! As last year there are un-numbered pages 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 Paul Hinde's request for volunteers to help at the NEC show. Those pages are in the centrefold, between pages 14 and 15.

Alan Browning, Editor

APHELION RESULTS - 2000

NORTHERN AREA

| | | | WFL | CHS | CMB | CRS | RDS | Pts |
|----|------------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 500 | H Jagers | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| 2 | 670 | P Hayes | | 4 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 |
| 3= | 585 | B Herring | 4 | 3 | 2 | 7 | | 9 |
| 3= | 633 | J Edwards | | 2 | 3 | 9 | 4 | 9 |
| 5 | 650 | P Hossell | 3 | 6 | | | 1 | 10 |
| 6 | 100 | S Bellamy | 9 | | | 4 | 5 | 18 |
| 7 | 643 | K Appleby | 8 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 18 |
| 8 | 762 | R Stevenson | 7 | 5 | 7 | 8 | | 19 |
| 9 | 438 | G Benson | 14 | 8 | 9 | | 8 | 25 |

EASTERN AREA

| | | | FGR | CRW | CHP | RDT | HAM | Pts |
|----|------------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 323 | A Walter | 1 | 9 | 6 | 10 | 2 | 9 |
| 2 | 117 | M Thompson | 2 | 6 | 4 | 5 | | 11 |
| 3 | 518 | R Ballam | 6 | 5 | 3 | 3 | | 11 |
| 4 | 700 | J Windibank | 3 | 4 | | | 4 | 11 |
| 5 | 63 | C Robinson | | 7 | 11 | 2 | 5 | 14 |
| 6 | 500 | H Jagers | 4 | | | 4 | 6 | 14 |
| 7 | 707 | D Coleman | 7 | 8 | 7 | 6 | | 20 |
| 8 | 430 | J Peach | | | 18 | 9 | 9 | 36 |
| 9 | 58 | D Pescod | | | 20 | 8 | 10 | 38 |
| 10 | 295 | J Clarke | | | 21 | 11 | 7 | 39 |

SOUTHERN AREA

| | | | TAP | FRN | HIL | LIT | KG | Pts |
|---|------------|-----------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|
| 1 | 711 | B Welham | 1 | 2 | | 4 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 188 | S Thompson | 2 | 1 | | 3 | 6 | 6 |
| 3 | 565 | R Smallwood | | 6 | 1 | 6 | | 13 |
| 4 | 518 | R Ballam | 6 | 9 | | 7 | 3 | 16 |
| 5 | 707 | D Coleman | 8 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 9 | 18 |
| 6 | 500 | H Jagers | 3 | | | 12 | 7 | 22 |

WESTERN AREA

| | | | SBG | RED | COT | ARD | MER | Pts |
|---|------------|-----------------|----------|-----|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 | 419 | P Govier | 2 | | 1 | 8 | 2 | 5 |
| 2 | 500 | H Jagers | 4 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 7 |
| 3 | 460 | M Govier | 1 | | 3 | 5 | 3 | 7 |
| 4 | 650 | P Hossell | | 4 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 12 |
| 5 | 633 | J Edwards | | 8 | 11 | 3 | | 22 |
| 6 | 585 | B Herring | | 10 | 9 | 6 | | 25 |
| 7 | 183 | M Gingell | | | 7 | 14 | 5 | 26 |
| 8 | 344 | N Boarder | | | 15 | 11 | 6 | 32 |
| 9 | 762 | R Stevenson | | 15 | 16 | 13 | | 44 |

CENTRAL AREA

| | | | BAN | NAS | AYL | SHA | PNG | Pts |
|---|------------|---------------------|----------|----------|-----|-----|----------|----------|
| 1 | 636 | I Coppenhall | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 427 | M Coppenhall | 2 | 2 | 1 | | | 5 |
| 3 | 500 | H Jagers | 3 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| 4 | 532 | J Coppenhall | 9 | 3 | 10 | 6 | 6 | 15 |
| 5 | 585 | B Herring | 11 | 5 | 5 | | | 21 |
| 6 | 762 | R Stevenson | 4 | 7 | 11 | | | 22 |
| 7 | 211 | C Weston | 12 | 10 | | 7 | | 29 |
| 8 | 641 | P Hinde | 13 | 11 | | 9 | | 33 |

ORBITAL RESULTS - 2000

| | | | Six best results | | | | | | Nats | Assn | Mtgs | Pts |
|----|------------|-----------------|------------------|----|----|----|----|----|------|------|------|-----|
| 1 | 500 | H Jagers | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 12 | 18 | 23 | 8 |
| 2 | 188 | S Thompson | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| 3 | 711 | B Welham | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 10 | | 9 | 12 |
| 4 | 670 | P Hayes | 1 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 21 | | 7 | 18 |
| 5 | 650 | P Hossell | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 9 | | 12 | 18 |
| 6 | 700 | J Windibank | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 11 | 3 | 8 | 18 |
| 7 | 585 | B Herring | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 29 | | 12 | 23 |
| 8 | 323 | A Walter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 15 | 9 | 11 | 25 |
| 9 | 518 | R Ballam | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 23 | 6 | 11 | 26 |
| 10 | 633 | J Edwards | 2 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 22 | 15 | 9 | 29 |
| 11 | 707 | D Coleman | 2 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 25 | 17 | 15 | 29 |
| 12 | 117 | M Thompson | 2 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 13 | 8 | 8 | 29 |
| 13 | 63 | C Rbinson | 2 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | | 7 | 10 | 33 |
| 14 | 750 | R Smallwood | 1 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 14 | 14 | 5 | 6 | 35 |
| 15 | 762 | R Stevenson | 4 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 30 | | 12 | 38 |
| 16 | 532 | J Coppenhall | 3 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 10 | 20 | | 7 | 40 |
| 17 | 643 | K Appleby | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 28 | | 7 | 42 |
| 18 | 641 | P Hinde | 5 | 7 | 9 | 11 | 13 | 26 | 26 | | 6 | 71 |
| 19 | 611 | P Walter | 8 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 16 | | 27 | 7 | 71 |
| 20 | 621 | G Flemons | 5 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 23 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 6 | 79 |
| 21 | 50 | D Thompson | 10 | 11 | 12 | 12 | 28 | 31 | 31 | 28 | 6 | 104 |

2000 APHELION & ORBITAL REVIEW

There is one person that will be mentioned over and over again in this article. "Why?" I hear you all ask. Well he has done such a lot (and is still doing it) to promote the Comets throughout the land. He attended an incredible (sorry, I used that word last year, but it is now even more relevant) 23, yes I repeat **23 events**. This feat was accomplished over a matter of 27 weekends starting on 15th April at Winsford Flash and concluding at Kingsmead on 15th October. Hands up all those who have not yet guessed who I am talking about. Our Chairman of course, Dr Henry Jagers.

Our next highest traveller, I believe, was Norah, although I cannot confirm the number of events she attended, as she did not enter any of them according to my records. But she was always there to support and promote the Class Association and deserves an award really for compiling the calendar of all our Open Meetings. Derek Coleman managed 15 events as he did last year. Ros Stevenson, Brian Herring and myself (with Liz) clocked up 12 meetings, with Robin Ballam and Annette Walter getting to 11 meetings. It was also good to see that Phil Walter (Annette's Dad) eventually got himself a Comet seeing that he was having to go to the events anyway. I remember the delight on his face when he beat Annette on the water in one of the races at Kingsmead, The coach isn't supposed to beat his student! Well done Phil and good to see you now on the water at the Open Meetings.

The attendances at the Open Meetings were not as healthy as in recent seasons averaging at 16.8 boats per event. Largest attendances were at Chipstead (28), Banbury (27) and Littleton (24). The circuit for 2000 contained 25 events concluding at Kingsmead SC on 15th October.

Our National Champion was John Challener (Mudeford), who retained his title at Glossop & District SC early in the season. He also convincingly won the Association Championship at Mudeford in August. Fortunately, for the rest of us, John did not compete at any other meetings.

Eastern Aphelion

Meetings in the area were held at Fishers Green, Crawley Mariners, Chipstead, Redoubt and Hampton Pier. Three different winners went into the final event at Hampton Pier. Annette Walter had won at Fishers Green, Len Dean at Chipstead and Simon Thompson at both Crawley Mariners & Redoubt. Any one of 6 different helms were in a position to win this area. Mark Wilkins won at Hampton Pier from Annette and brother, Guy. This second place gave 17 year old Annette the Area Trophy with Michael Thompson and Robin Ballam in 2nd and 3rd places respectively, in an area that had 10 qualifiers.

Western Aphelion

Merthyr Tydfil SC was the venue for the final event of the Western Area Aphelion on 30 September that also included meetings at Sutton Bingham, Redditch, Cotswold and Arden. Before the Merthyr meeting, Mark Govier (Sutton Bingham), Ian Coppenhall (Redditch), Paul Govier (Cotswold) and Stephen Lemmon (Arden) had already achieved one victory apiece, so there was all to fight for in this final event to take the Area Trophy. Both Paul and Mark Govier and Henry Jagers fought out the Merthyr meeting with Henry hitting winning form with Paul in second and Mark in third. Paul managed to win his first Area Trophy ahead of Henry and Mark. There were 9 Area qualifiers.

Central Aphelion

Ian Coppenhall totally dominated this area ably supported by brother, Mark, and father, John. Ian set the trend by winning at Banbury and Naseby with Mark second on each occasion. Dad, John, also managed third at Naseby with sister, Emma also taking sixth place. Mark then won at Aylesbury, and Peter Hayes took the honours at Staunton Harold. Ian resumed his winning streak at the final meeting at Pingewood on 1st October to take the Area Trophy. Mark took second overall from a very consistent Henry in third place. 8 helms qualified for the Central Area.

Northern Aphelion

The Northern Area Aphelion was sealed up after the first three meetings where Henry won at Winsford Flash, Chester and Combs. Believe it or not, this was Henry's first ever Aphelion Trophy. Peter Hayes took the honours at Carsington with myself winning the final event at Redesmere on 8 October. Henry therefore took his first Area Trophy after coming very close over many years with Peter taking second and Brian Herring and John Edwards could not be separated in third place in an area that produced 9 Area qualifiers.

Southern Aphelion

Kingsmead SC provided the venue for the final event in the Southern Area Aphelion. Earlier winners had been Brian Welham at Taplow Lake, Simon Thompson at Frensham Pond, Richard Smallwood at Hillhead and Martin Vinson at Littleton. Brian and Simon went into the last event with the best chance of lifting the Area Trophy. Brian had to fight hard to keep his club mate, Tony Best at bay to take the Kingsmead meeting and the Southern Area Aphelion. Simon was second with Richard Smallwood third in an area that produced 6 qualifiers.

Orbital Trophy

There were 21 helms that qualified for the Orbital award. By the last event at Kingsmead Henry had virtually sewn up the Orbital Trophy. With the best 6 events to count, Henry had already achieved 4 first places and two seconds, with his closest rival not present at Kingsmead. Simon Thompson and Brian Welham were going for the runners-up spot. Although Brian won the final event, he was now tying with Simon. The tie was broken in favour of Simon who had achieved three victories to Brian's two. Fourth, fifth and sixth places were also decided on a tie break with Peter Hayes having secured two wins to my one and John Windibank without a win.

Brian Herring, having recently become a senior citizen, took seventh place with some consistent results, closely followed by the first lady and junior, Annette Walter (8th) and the ageless Robin Ballam (9th).

Well, perhaps we ought to rename this section, THE HENRY JAGGERS ROADSHOW. Congratulations Henry, it was a magnificent year for you. May

you long continue as our Chairman and represent the Comet Class Association on the road.

Phillip Hossell (Comet 650 Severn SC)

SOME THOUGHTS FROM THE SHORE

Over the past couple of years I have taken the opportunity to travel to various Open meetings, which has enabled me to meet Comet helms and club members, and to look at the club facilities. As a result, I can justifiably say that although the size of the clubs may vary, the hospitality and warmth of their welcome doesn't.

Some of the larger clubs are run on professional lines, and the catering done on a commercial basis. At others, such as Shearwater and Redoubt, a run to the local chippy is organised. At a couple of places, the hangers-on (such as me) have helped cook and serve.

Liz Hossell and I have helped do a variety of shore-based jobs, such as taking entry fees, watching for boats over the start line, or helping sort out the results. I recall one occasion where the rescue boat driver couldn't make it, so I did a water-based duty. It was one of the few times when my sailing bag wasn't in the car, and it was raining. ...Henry's spraysuit was alright as long as I didn't bend so I borrowed some oilies from a club member who must have been about 6'6" - the top of the bib came somewhere around my nose. But at least I stayed dry.

One job which we are often asked to do is the report. We decline, as we see that as being part of the host club's job. However, we have been known to make a few notes. With the best will in the world, it isn't easy to see what's going on behind an island, or on the other side of the lake.

This year the biggest contrast in club facilities which we encountered were at Carsington, Mudeford and Redoubt. Carsington has palatial club facilities and a vast sailing area. Neither Mudeford or Redoubt have running water on site, and the changing areas are behind curtains. The water areas at clubs like Winsford, Fishers Green, Merthyr Tydfil, Kingsmead and Littleton are very different from the river venues at Arden and Chester. At Chester last year we were taken to the boathouse downstream for lunch. For those of you who haven't sailed at Shearwater, make a note of their 2001 Open meeting - they have winds from all directions (sometimes all at once)!

I think that the main thing which I have learned on my travels is that every single club says that it has fluky winds - and I'm sure that they do!

Norah Gould

BUILDER'S REPORT

This past year has been the busiest ever in terms of boat sales. The new Comet Zero has done very well and seems to fit one of those niches in the market that all the Comet range try to find.

Twenty-three Zeros are now sold but the interest in them has been so good we are busy putting a few more into stock. Two of those sold were part-exchange for Duos and another two for Comets, one of the Comets has since become the first Comet at a club near Bury St Edmunds. About a dozen Duos have been sold, with most of them as school boats. Fifteen Trios have sold but none to schools, whereas the previous year six had gone to schools.

Last but not least, fourteen Comets have been sold this year, with a third Comet Club joining an older Comet at Eyott S.C. in Essex, a second Comet joining Paul Hinde at Middle Nene S.C., a first Comet at Croydon S.C. and one more at Aylesbury S.C.

Two Comet Minos went north in the spring to Keilder, as club training boats and other Minos went to Rockley in Poole and Porthmadog.

As ever plenty of Comets have changed hands in the second-hand market. With 790 Comets out there, all of them in one piece so to speak, the actual Comet fleet is probably bigger than some of the older classes with much higher sail numbers. Don't forget the Comet is twenty years old next year, so I estimate possibly fifty plus Comets are sold second-hand each year. The peak years for the Comet were in the late 80's and early 90's where a lot of people were buying a second dinghy for when they couldn't find a crew. In those days, when second-hand Comets were scarce, you almost had to buy a new one to get one at all!

We have done little advertising this year as at one point in the spring I was quoting a ten-week wait for any boats. There will be more ads next year and I think the Comet Mino as a dinghy has a lot of potential. After a few years most youngsters would be moving up to the big rig.

There is also a strong chance of a Comet Dinghies web site in the near future. As for boat shows, Southampton suffered from appalling weather and the fuel crisis but a couple of dinghies have been sold since. In the New Year we're off to the London Boat Show at Earls Court where this time I'm only showing the Zero and Trio, on a stand half the size of the last two years.

The show has changed over the years, I hardly see any Comet owners there these days so I figure potential owners are also potentially lacking. Most owners and would be owners now go to the Sailboat Show in March where there is obviously much more for the dinghy sailor. Money saved at London this year could be useful for better and more regular adverts.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all and I'll see a lot of you at Sailboat in March.

Andrew Simmons, Builder of the Comet range of Sailing Dinghies



SAILBOAT 2001

Sailboat & Windsurf Show: Alexandra Palace

Saturday 3rd March:10am - 6pm, Sunday 4th March:10am - 5pm.

As a Comet sailor this is your show with everything there for your needs. It's really what might be called the start of the season. Our stand is normally manned by members of the Committee who are only too pleased to help. Traffic wise its not too bad to get there. There is a free bus service from Wood Green (Piccadilly Line) Underground.

The Comet Class Association have been allocated a corner site of a gondola block near the centre of the Great Hall. Andrew Simmons' trade stand "Comet Dinghies" is situated at the far end of the West Hall.

On Sunday, under 16's are free when with a paying adult (2 per Adult). It's possible you are the dinghy person and your offspring is the windsurfer, oh sorry I have got it the wrong way around ? Still come anyway.

We will be there for you, so pay us a visit. It's the first weekend in MARCH.

If you require further information give me a ring on 01243 672520

Derek Coleman. (Committee Member.)

● NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

1. The Millennium Regatta was great fun, and our thanks go to John Windibank for all his hard work in organising the event. Thanks too to Chipstead for hosting the show, and to Mavis Windibank for setting such a super quiz. The Committee was pleased that the Regatta was well supported by Comet racers, and disappointed that it did not attract the families, non-racers, Duo and Trio sailors for whom it had been planned.
2. Paul Hinde is organising the support team for our stand at the NEC. We should be in the same spot as we were last year.
3. Nick Warren is co-ordinating the stand at Sailboat which will again be in the Great Hall, but nearer to the central demonstration area.
4. Liz Hossell would welcome thoughts and ideas about trophies for next year, particularly the mementoes for the championships.
5. The committee agreed that advertisements for second-hand boats etc in Perihehon and on the website should continue to be free, even to non- members as it is in the Association's interest that boats are sold on and used. A nominal fee has been discussed, but the cost of collecting small amount renders it non-viable. We will continue to encourage people to consider making a donation once they have sold their boat.

Norah Gould, Class Secretary

● PERIHELION

The next issue of Perihelion will be circulated in early April 2001. **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 58!

Alan Browning, Editor

● NEC SHOW, BIRMINGHAM

Caravan, Boating and Leisure Exhibition 2001

Would you like a free ticket to this show?

Can you spare four hours?

Are you able to spare a morning or afternoon between the 17th and 25th of February 2001 to help promote the COMET Class Association and the Royal Yachting Association at this prestigious exhibition?

If you are able to help with the COMET stand at the NEC, please fill in the attached form and return it to me at the address shown on the bottom of the form. Alternatively, contact me on:

Phone: 07703 654 899

OR e-mail: paul@hindep.supanet.com

When completing the form, please could you give an indication of when you are able to help staff the Class Association stand. Unfortunately it will not be possible to allocate everybody to their chosen times, but every effort will be made to do so. As a result it will be necessary, after consultation, to timetable people at times other than those requested.

The aim is to have at least two people staffing the stand in two shifts, morning and afternoon. The morning shift will be from 10:00 until 14:00 and the afternoon one from 14:00 until 19:00 on Saturday and Sunday and until 18:00 on weekdays.

Paul Hinde, Comet 641

Please complete the form overleaf to volunteer to help with the COMET Class Association stand.

(continued overleaf)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

JAN - MAR 2001

January 5 - 14: London Boat Show, Earls Court
February 17 - 25: Leisure Exhibition, NEC Birmingham
March 3 - 4: Sailboat 2001, Alexandra Palace

Dates for Your Diary:

Association Championship Sun 27/Mon 28 May
Littleton, Nick Warren 01344 523591

National Championship 25/26/27 August
Portland & Weymouth Sailing Centre

Open Meetings for April and May 2001:

| | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|
| Shearwater | Sat 21 April | Nic Cross | 01373 822258 |
| Fishers Green | Sat 28 April | Paul Rayson | 0208 360 7162 |
| Winsford Flash | Sat 5 May | Brian Herring | 01625 585745 |
| Banbury | Sat 12 May | Phil Henman | 01926 640271 |
| Crawley Mariners | Sat 13 May | Diana Thompson | 01737 552482 |
| Chester | Sun 13 May | John Edwards | 01829 781234 |

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 2001 Perihelion.

FRENESHAM POND OPEN

We seem to be able to find good weather for the Frensham Pond Open meeting and this year was one of the best - brisk and bright for the first two races, with less of the sudden gusting for which Frensham is famous. Race three presented the competitors with shifts and holes in the best Frensham tradition. Seventeen Comets competed in the Open sharing the water with five Comet Trios who were having an open of their own. Quite a day for the boats from Comet Dinghies. The Open was run to a three race format using Committee boat starts and finishes to a fairly short line.

The first race was won by Brian Welham with John Windibank second and Jake Sutton third. Simon Thompson and Paul Luttmann chasing the leaders and coming in 4th and 5th respectively.

The second race saw the wind get up and this time Jake took first place from Simon with John coming third.

Things were much more difficult in the third race as the wind veered and changed in strength. Simon led for much of the time from John with "nothing in it", pursued by Brian and Paul. A hole in the wind dumped the chasing pack and left the leaders, who avoided it, half a leg up. In the event Simon opened out a longish lead and held it from the chasing bunch that now consisted of Richard Smallwood, Brian, Robin Ballam and Jake. At the finish line Simon won with Richard second and Paul third.

Overall placings were:

| | | | |
|---|-----|----------------|------------------|
| 1 | 188 | Simon Thompson | Crawley Mariners |
| 2 | 642 | Jake Sutton | Frensham |
| 3 | 711 | Brian Welham | Taplow Lake |
| 4 | 700 | John Windibank | Chipstead |
| 5 | 99 | Paul Luttmann | Crawley Mariners |
| 6 | 63 | Chris Robinson | Burghfield |

A good tea (Frensham always does good teas) ended a cheerful meeting in the sun with plenty of good racing all the way down the fleet. Comets are always welcome at Frensham.

Charles Smith, Slow Handicap Captain.

STAUNTON HAROLD OPEN

A fleet of eighteen boats (seven from Staunton Harold) contested the above event in winds ranging from Force 2 to 5 with sunshine and showers. OOD Dave Newton (the noted Laser sailor) set an interesting selection of courses to test the competitor's skills.

In the first race Mike Squirrel led from Richard Smallwood and Henry Jagers at the first mark and extended his lead before falling victim to a SHSC hole with Annette Walter coming through on the reach to take the lead, which she maintained to win ahead of Jagers and Jack Thompson.

The second race proved to be the windiest of the day providing excellent spectator sport as numerous competitors' demonstrated novel approaches to parting company with their craft. Peter Hayes hung on to his boat to win, followed by Smallwood and John Coppenhall.

The final race saw lighter conditions, which allowed Jagers to show his speed and take the win from Hayes with Thompson in third place.

Overall results:

| | | | |
|---|-----|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 670 | Peter Hayes | Redesmere |
| 2 | 500 | Henry Jagers | Staunton Harold |
| 3 | 750 | Richard Smallwood | Frensham Pond |

Trish Moore Fleet Captain.

MERTHYR TYDFIL OPEN

After an almost continuous three days of heavy rain and strong winds earlier in the week Saturday greeted us with beautiful weather. We had a straight southerly force two blowing directly up the lake providing fair sailing conditions for crews of all sizes and abilities.

It was all to play for. This was the last event in the Comet Class Western Aphelion series and it was close; read on...

In the first race Henry Jagers got away first near the outer mark with Alun Bevan starting well on port tack closer inshore. At the windward mark Phil Hossell rounded a few feet ahead of Paul Govier who was closely followed by the two lightweights Henry Jagers and Alun Bevan. By the end of the first lap Henry had overtaken Phil with Mark Govier close behind Paul Govier in third and fourth places. Henry remained in front throughout the four laps and took an important first place. Paul, Mark and Phil swapped places in almost all possible combinations but at the end of the fourth lap Phil had pulled away from Paul who managed to stay ahead of his brother Mark.

With a 1.5km windward leg set for the second race there was good scope for sailors to use clear air and gain best advantage. Again Alun Bevan had a good port end start with Roger Edwards and Phil Hossell getting good starts at the starboard end of the line. As the boats approached the windward mark, despite having taken radically different courses they were surprisingly close together. Henry Jagers rounded first about 50m ahead of Mark Govier. Phil Hossell came round in third place followed by Malcolm Gingell and Paul Govier. Downwind Mark Govier could not catch Henry Jagers but managed to open up the gap to the following pack. As this race neared its conclusion the wind stopped near the line and Mark almost ran down Henry's 100m lead with an advantageous gust. But this fizzled out and Henry finished first closely followed by Mark. Malcolm finished third, followed by Paul who had both managed to squeeze past Phil.

The very light wind that followed for the third race had swung around towards the east and made crossing the line on starboard tack a very narrow angle. However, most boats still opted for this tack and almost blocked the two on port tack. All boats immediately tacked onto port which took them almost to the windward mark. Phil Hossell managed to get away first and rounded the windward mark first just ahead of Paul Govier. The boats closed up again as they approached the first downwind mark and as this was rounded the wind stopped; completely. It took what seemed an age to complete the 300m or so of what should have been a close

reach. Alun Bevan got clear and rounded the second gybe mark and headed, slowly, away towards the bottom mark. Paul Govier managed to get round second and then Mark Govier followed Phil Hossell and Nigel Boarder onto this leg. Mark took what seemed to be an inside position and managed to stay ahead of Phil and Nigel. As all three rounded the bottom mark a little improvement in the wind situation was apparent but no-one could catch Alun Bevan who recorded his first win in an open meeting. Paul held on to second place as Mark attempted to close down the gap. Phil stayed ahead of his club-mate Nigel.

Final results:

| | | | | |
|---|-----|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| 1 | 500 | Henry Jagers | Staunton Harold | 1,1,DNS |
| 2 | 419 | Paul Govier | Merthyr Tydfil | 3,4,2 |
| 3 | 460 | Mark Govier | Merthyr Tydfil | 4,2,3 |
| 4 | 650 | Phil Hossell | Severn | 2,5,4 |
| 5 | 420 | Alun Bevan | Merthyr Tydfil | 6,6,1 |
| 6 | 183 | Malcolm Gingell | Chippenham | 5,3,DNF |
| 7 | 344 | Nigel Boarder | Severn | 7,7,5 |
| 8 | 426 | Roger Edwards | Merthyr Tydfil | 8,8,DNS |

Comet Class, Western Aphelion Trophy

Paul Govier's finish ahead of his brother ensured that Paul took the Western Aphelion trophy with a first at Cotswold S.C. and two seconds, here at Merthyr Tydfil and another much earlier in the year at Sutton Bingham S.C. Henry squeezed into second place on tie-break ahead of Mark Govier.

Mark Govier



“Messing about in boats” (Norah Gould)
(Photographic competition - winner, Comet fun)

MILLENNIUM REGATTA, A PERSONAL VIEW

When the Millennium Regatta was planned, it was intended as a time for Comet Dinghy families to join together for a couple of days of fun sailing, light hearted racing and on shore entertainment. We arrived at Chipstead on August Bank Holiday Monday to find a number of very wet sailors coming ashore from the club racing - not too promising, but the forecast was better.

We were delighted to greet Jean from Norfolk, towing her Zero on top of her trailer tent. Her easi-loader had broken so it was a case of 'all hands' to get the boat off and on to it's trolley. Jean seemed equal to any emergency and had brought wood with which to mend the frame. Having sorted her boat out she set up camp for the night.

Andrew arrived with a Trio and a Zero. He and son Peter sailed the former, and Richard Smallwood helmed the latter, having left his Comet at home. I had a go at crewing for him and had a thoroughly enjoyable couple of days (couldn't walk for days afterwards, but it was worth it!). Thank you Richard. The rest of the fleet comprised a lonely Duo, a third Zero and 20 Comets.

John Windibank set us a handicap race to start with each day (Richard's handicap was me) and used the results from that to determine the starting sequence for the pursuit race later in the day. Robin Ballam was most put out at having to give Henry Jaggars a 2-minute lead on the first day! I spent the first day trying to work out how, and when, to put the asymmetric into operation. By the end of Day 2, I was getting the hang of it, and even acted as a human whisker pole. There was a bit of wind on the Wednesday so Richard wasn't able to continue with his 'I'm having a snooze' stance adopted in light to no zephyrs.

The relay race proved to be great fun for participants and spectators. We were split into teams composed of Comets plus either a Zero, Duo or Trio. Each team was given a coloured band, and decided in which order their boats should sail. The first helms to go started from a mark on the shore, ran to their boat and set off. They then sailed a triangular course, made their way back to shore (alternative methods of propulsion were allowed at this point), ran back to the starting point and handed the band over to the next member of the team. The job of their teammates was to have the boat ready to go/ meet on return /cheer/ generally encourage etc. Given that there was a distinct lack of wind and that some competitors didn't appreciate that they could paddle after the final mark, places changed after every lap.

John had also set a treasure hunt which had been intended for families as much as the sailors, although there were some clues which could only be seen from the water. I didn't get around to doing it, but the people who did had fun searching the lakeside and club site.

We enjoyed a super meal in the clubhouse on the Tuesday evening, after which we were joined by a number of the Chipstead members for a challenging quiz. I know that I got rather excited and noisy as time went on, and our team's points were increasing steadily. In the end, we won, so I came away from the event with an honourable prize!

The prizes were distributed in an even-handed fashion, with no one being allowed to have more than one prize for sailing. As a Class Association we had donated two prizes which were awarded as spot prizes for the pursuit races. Before each of the pursuit races, the Race Officer drew a ticket from a hat. The prize was awarded to the boat finishing in the place corresponding to the number on the ticket. Richard and I would have won if Henry hadn't sneaked past us in the closing stages of the first race. As it was, the Comet Association awards went, fittingly, to Henry Jagers and Andrew Simmons.

I understand that Chipstead may arrange a similar event next year. If they do, make a point of being there. It was great fun (even if I did look a bit like a Dalmatian afterwards), not too serious, and a good opportunity to spend time with friends - and make new ones.

Oh yes, and if you don't believe that I went out in a boat, Andrew's photo album for the Zero has the proof!

Norah Gould



“A spot of gardening” (Norah Gould)
(Photographic competition: runner-up, Comet fun)

LOOKING BACK AT THE NATIONALS, 1993 - 2000

Since I have been the Editor of Perihelion there have been eight National Championships which are of course the most prestigious competition encompassing the whole of Britain. I have made a point of including in Perihelion full lists of placings, and more recently the race positions too, and I now take a look at those results, to highlight some achievements, particularly of our most loyal members. I cannot go back further because the results shown in Perihelion are incomplete and I do not trust my own notes and video records.

Firstly, because I am making an analysis of competition results, and competitive people always want such things done as competently as possible, I explain my method, for which I welcome constructive criticism. Then follows a brief presentation of the achievements of the top Comet sailors and some achievements of those usually in middle and lower positions in the fleet.

I have taken the view of local newspapers in emphasising success and turning a blind eye to failures. Because my analysis can reflect to the future, I have only included sailors who are either currently members or non-members who have been very loyal and may come back..

Analysis method

The numbers of sailors qualifying in the Nationals has varied from 20 to 50 so that just looking at the positions can be misleading because somebody consistently in mid-fleet can have positions varying from 10 to 25. To allow for this I have calculated a "percentage score" where the champion is allocated 100% and the lowest placed 0%. For those mathematically inclined, the formula is:

$$\text{percentage score} = (n-p)*100/(n-1)$$

where n is the number of qualifiers and p the position of the sailor concerned. By inspection you can see that for the champion $p=1$ (the two brackets cancel out) and for the lowest place, $p=n$ and the score is zero. For the middle man, $p=(n+1)/2$ giving a score of 50%. (Go on, check that with a bit of algebra!).

That gives me a score which makes allowance for the fleet size. I cannot allow for many other things which will affect just where in the fleet a sailor will come, eg different venues, winds, tides, illness, hang-overs etc but comparing scores for each sailor year-by-year can give some idea of improvement (or degradation).

Where there are rivalries between pairs of sailors who enter regularly, a good comparison ought to be possible because the venues, tides and weather conditions were the same for both.

Ranking list

Having got scores for everybody qualifying in any or every one of the eight championships, I can calculate their average scores. These give a ranking list. Some sailors entered just one Nationals, possibly because it was held at their own or a nearby club, and I have not included them in the ranking list. Others entered 2 or 3 Nationals and these are listed separately. As mentioned above, sailors who are not current members are omitted too but any current non-members qualifying in 6 or more championships are included.

OK, let's see what comes out of it.

The full list of percentage scores is:

| | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | Av. |
|-------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|
| Guy Wilkins | 100 | 100 | 100 | 94 | 97 | 98 | 91 | 87 | 96 |
| John Challener | | | | 77 | 100 | | 100 | 100 | 94 |
| Mark Wilkins | | 86 | 96 | 84 | 83 | 96 | 96 | 90 | 90 |
| John Windibank | 89 | 92 | 79 | 81 | 55 | 80 | 87 | 67 | 79 |
| Richard Smallwood | | 72 | 93 | | | 84 | 83 | 57 | 78 |
| Simon Thompson | 63 | 67 | 75 | 71 | 69 | 88 | 78 | 80 | 74 |
| Phillip Hossell | | 58 | | 52 | 72 | 67 | 70 | 73 | 65 |
| Heidi Dodd | | | 61 | 65 | 45 | 86 | | | 64 |
| Martin Vinson | | | 57 | 58 | 52 | 76 | | | 61 |
| Henry Jagers | | 36 | | 48 | 14 | 92 | 57 | 63 | 52 |
| Michael Thompson | 47 | 14 | 50 | 35 | 59 | 63 | 74 | 60 | 50 |
| Peter Hayes | 58 | 47 | 68 | 45 | | | | 33 | 50 |
| Brian Welham | | 39 | 18 | 74 | 7 | 90 | | 70 | 50 |
| Tony Best | | 69 | 43 | 29 | | 51 | | | 48 |
| Robin Ballam | 53 | 64 | 54 | 32 | 38 | 55 | | 27 | 46 |
| Derek Coleman | | 53 | 14 | 42 | 41 | 69 | | 20 | 40 |
| Paul Hinde | | | | 19 | | 37 | 39 | 17 | 28 |
| Barry O'Herlihy | 21 | 28 | 0 | | 34 | | 30 | | 23 |
| Diana Thompson | 11 | | 4 | 16 | 24 | 8 | 13 | 0 | 11 |

Other scores were: Stephen Cook (2 entries) 86, Heather Back (3) 67, Chris Robinson (3) 62, Paul Luttmann (3) 61, Nick Warren (3) 58, Annette Walter (3) 40, Michael Baxter (2) 39, Nigel Ford (2) 37, Len Dean (3) 30, John Edwards (2) 26, Clive Chapman (3) 23, Emer Power (2), Barry Sandle (2) 17, Fiona Cauter (2) 9.

Achievements at the top of the fleet

The top three: Guy Wilkins, John Challener and Mark Wilkins, were clearly outstanding, averaging 90% plus. There were only 4 scores like that by others, John Windibank (1994), Richard Smallwood (1995), Henry Jaggars (1998) and Brian Welham (1998). One might ask "which of the Wilkins brothers comes out best?". A statistical test (ref 1) gives Guy the higher ranking, but this pays no regard to the possibility of Mark improving in recent years. They will no doubt have their own views on this! Comparing the top 3, in Nationals in which they all competed, I find no significant difference between them (ref 2), so perhaps John Challener has no cause to relax!

The next three, Windibank, Smallwood and Simon Thompson, all achieved an average of over 70%. Their results were very similar. Indeed, John and Richard often seemed to sail together and were obviously rivals. In a statistical comparison (ref 3) there is no convincing difference between them, they must be considered as near-equals. The next best beneath them was 9% lower, 65%, so these three sailors, together with the top three, must be regarded as the top of the regularly sailing Comet fleet.

Upper mid-fleet achievements

The next three: Phil Hossell, Heidi Dodd and Martin Vinson, are the upper middle fleet, 61% to 65%. We all know that Heidi and Martin were rivals as well as partners. Phil's results have been better in the later years. These three cannot be separated by my statistical test (ref 3).

Lower mid-fleet achievements

Some 9% or more below lie the lower mid-fleet, 7 of them, with averages of 40% to 52%. Michael Thompson has been particularly consistent, especially in later years. The results of Henry Jaggars and Brian Welham seem to match year by year, even to their 90% plus scores at Frensham in 1998. Could wind strength and body weight be important here? Clearly Tony Best and Robin Ballam saw a lot of each other in four of the Nationals, their results were very similar, as were Derek Coleman's. Statistically (ref 3) these 7 sailors cannot be separated so my ranking within this group is of little value. Perhaps a prize could in the future be awarded for a competition between members of this group.

Lower fleet achievements

There are only three names in the lower fleet but if those entering 2 or 3 Nationals had been included, there would have been seven more. Their achievements are not so much in their results as in their perseverance. Anyone who has been a spectator at these Nationals will have seen the lower fleet battling away, often in atrocious conditions (Gunfleet, Queen Marys, Glossop, Hampton, Sheppey) and marvelled at their tenacity. There is, just, a significant difference within this group of three.

Conclusion

So ends my attempt at analysing the results from eight National Championships. There are no doubt hundreds of ways the analysis can be done, but I have tried to be objective. Some (eg a former colleague, "Comet 713") can probably make a better job of it than I have, and I welcome comment from him or anyone else.

Alan Browning Editor.

References: The statistical tests used here are non-parametric tests which are described in a text book "Nonparametric statistics for the behavioral sciences" by Sydney Siegel, McGraw-Hill, 1956.

Ref 1: Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed ranks test

Ref 2: Friedman two-way analysis of variance

Ref 3: Kruskal-Wallis one-way analysis of variance



SAILING - SPORT OR PASTIME ?

The attraction of sailing for me.

Some years ago I worked in an office with a keen sailor, but at that time I was into table tennis as a sport. Competitive table tennis has, like many sports, few winners and lots of losers. If you're not very good you go out of knock-out events very quickly, you pay your money and the good players get their (my) moneys worth. League play gets you 3 games once a week, with not much travelling, but what I really liked was banging the ball about, I liked the feel of it, the sound of it and the general atmosphere of the table tennis scene. But my colleague in the office put the seed into my head that sailing was better because virtually everybody in a race can compete with somebody, and on top of that the weakest (slowest) were on the water longer and got more sailing rather than less. In effect, if you're not at the front you can feel you're not a loser.

Later in my table tennis life I achieved a basic coaching diploma and for a short while I took table tennis competition seriously. I became keen to try to beat the best player in our division, who rarely lost a game let alone a set. I studied how he played and found a weakness in his game and the next time I played him I played to that weakness for the whole of the first game. He was obviously rather distressed, and I think I might even have won that game, I forget now, but my life changed forever. It was so boring, I didn't enjoy it, he didn't enjoy it and I realised that I did not care if I won or not, all I wanted was a pastime to bang a ball about. There was more to it than that really, it was good exercise and that made me feel good for some time afterwards.

Comet sailing

When retirement approached, sailing beckoned and I thought that if I didn't start sailing then I never would. After RYA 1 & 2 and a year or two with a Graduate I bought my Comet at retirement. Why a Comet ? Several things, I liked the simplicity of construction very much, it had transom sheeting like the Grad, a yardstick the same as the Grad and - - - the thing that tipped the balance, there were 5 articles by Keith Lamdin, in Perihelion issues 8 to 12, on how to sail a Comet. What more could I want? I got more, a very friendly class and encouragement from all I met. Since then I have sailed my Comet, as a pastime, for fun, at the back of handicap fleets at Frensham Pond.

Comet racing

It's true that joining in races gives me an idea of how I'm progressing in comparison with others, but I don't race a lot because, while coming near-last every time emphasises that I need to improve, it is more fun for me to practise techniques to become better in control of things. Club racing does give me safety cover, an excuse to sail and social contact with other sailors, that's where the friendly class comes in. When I improve my skill, perhaps I'll enjoy mid-fleet competition more than I have done at the back of the fleet, I'll have to wait and see. As for open meetings and championships, I can get my fun at my club without trailing my boat all over the country. Training sessions ? That's different, and I've had a very pleasant taster recently at Pingewood (see below). After that I certainly recommend the Comet Association training sessions to "pastime" sailors like me.

Alan Browning, Mino 361

PINGEWOOD TRAINING DAY- THANKS KEITH AND NORAH

The weather forecast looked as though it might not blow a force 4 plus, that's what made me think of going to the Pingewood training day. A call to Norah Gould confirmed that it was to be Keith Lamdin in charge again - that settled it. The plan was to be general training, not race training and that suited me fine. My progress and problems are documented in my booklet "The Comet for the really raw beginner" (Perihelions 23 - 27, 1992-93) and I had looked forward to attending a Comet training day - - - it's been seven years !

Training for what?

My major problems in 1993 had been lateral balance and beating. They still are! So, with those areas for improvement in mind, off I went. My attempts at roll-

tacking are very poor, my inclinometer tells me that I manage about 10 degrees, whereas the middle and top of the fleet roll more than 40, so I resolved to ask Keith about how to improve that.

Getting there.

The first task was to transport the boat. My Comet has moved from Frensham only 4 times since I bought it in 1991 and I resolved to tie it on to the combi-trailer as simply as possible. That turned out to be a good philosophy, I just took the boat from its berth, pulled it on the trailer, tied one rope round it and a few short ones round the spars and set off - watching it carefully in the mirror. I found I could leave all the control ropes where they were, easier than I had expected.

On-land chat.

Norah was organising the training day and there were just two of us as customers, Sue Bumfry from Hertfordshire and me. After a very pleasant cuppa, Keith talked to us about setting the sail controls when preparing for sailing. This was a good reminder for me because, although most of what he said is to be found in his 5 articles on "Sailing your Comet", and his booklet on "Setting your Comet sail", it is easy to forget things and get into the habit of pulling all the controls to their extremes. Keith talked about controlling heeling in the gybe, avoiding windward capsizes and burying the nose on the run. Then it was time to sail.

General sailing.

There wasn't much wind and for an hour we looked for the best there was and sailed up and down, beating and running, so that Keith could have a look at us, Keith was in the safety boat driven by Norah. I had mentioned to him my difficulty in attempting to roll in tacking and within minutes Keith pointed out that I was crossing over a shade too early in the tacks. So I tried a brief hesitation before crossing over and the rolling was considerable. At that moment the day was worthwhile for me and I tried to incorporate that little delay in my tacks thereafter. I'm sure Keith was helping Sue as well, no doubt in quite different ways. It's surprising how a group training situation can feel so much like "one-to-one" to the pupils. Once I did what for me was a super roll-tack but let go of the mainsheet after crossing over, but that didn't matter, Keith saw that the roll had been achieved.

Discussion.

Over lunch, courtesy of Norah, Keith asked what sort of thing we wanted to do in the afternoon. I hope I did not disappoint Sue when I said it was boat handling I needed rather than anything to do with racing. In the discussion I asked Keith to comment on how to hold the tiller extension, "dagger" grip or "handshake" grip. Sailing mostly on my own at Frensham with no rescue backup, I have not dared to

use anything but the handshake grip, learned in RYA 2. Keith said that he often held the tiller extension as you would hold a pen. This of course sets the tiller extension in about the same line as the forearm, not at right-angles as happens with the handshake and dagger grips and I resolved to try this in the afternoon.

Second session.

Off we went for the second (two-hour) session on the water. Immediately I tried the "penholder" grip and very soon found that I liked it. Occasionally I forgot and reverted to the "handshake" grip but I was determined to persevere with it. For me this was great progress, a second major satisfaction for the training day, thank you Keith! My tacks, with my hesitation and new found grip, felt great and Norah commented that they were calmer than before and I looked more in control. In the wind-up discussion Keith was kind enough to say that the main thing that both Sue and I needed was to sail a lot.

General training days.

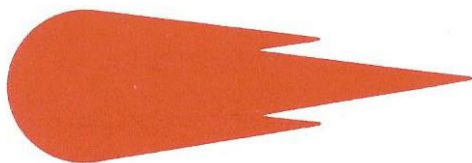
The main point of me writing about this training day is not really to expound on what I learned, important though it was to me. I've no doubt that Sue learned things too, quite different things I imagine, and I hope she found it as valuable as I did. The point is that these general training days are something that the Comet Class Association organises and they can benefit Comet owners who do not race much.

Being retired, I can choose my time to sail and practise my techniques, and have fun in the process, but if I want to be experimental in stronger winds it is safer to join in races where rescue cover is provided. But as you see, I am willing to take my boat to training sessions, and after this one I am much more keen to do so.

Future training days.

I was saddened to hear that Keith was planning to make this day at Pingewood his last training day. I hope he will change his mind. We got information and encouragement on the aspects of sailing we requested and he could have done this for many more than the two of us who came. Indeed, many of his sessions have had far more than two customers. I do think that general training can be blended in with race training. I think Keith had half a mind to do that at Pingewood in the afternoon had we asked for it, but the point is that Comet owners who race infrequently should enjoy the race training days that the Association lays on and learn more about Comet handling from them. I will certainly be more interested now in joining in them. A big thank-you to Norah for arranging this one.

Alan Browning, Mino 361



Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association