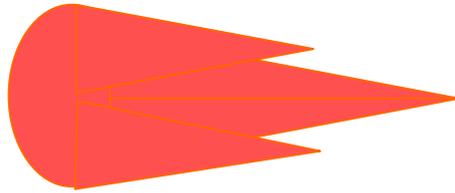


# PERIHELION 132



A different take on Fending off!  
©Comet Dinghies

## **Comet Class Association Newsletter**

# Spring 2021

# ***NEWSLETTER NUMBER***

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**NORAH JAGGERS**  
(Non Committee)

## **Editorial**

How nice it is to be almost back to normal! No galley, no bar or no changing room facility, sailing is going ahead but least we are on the water! Events are being rescheduled for later in the year, plus our usual Championships are well into the planning phase and the 40th anniversary of Comet 1 is drawing close.



Whilst we have tried to keep you informed by the brief 'newsletters' it was thought that we had sufficient to forego a newsletter and publish a Perihelion. As usual I am indebted to the contributors one of whom thought not to send his item to me! Ve ave vays, ha, ha.

Included in this edition is a reprint, thanks Henry, of an article from 1988 by our President, Keith Lamdin, on the technicalities of sailing. I have read it several times over the years and it is beginning to make sense, perhaps my usual 'view from the rear' will change, who knows! Keith has used Chris Robinson's article on the Nationals to provide his own reminisces. I am sure that some of you have 'articles within you'. Please forward them.

The rebuild of the website is on hold until the winter so that should things go wrong I will have time to reconstruct it.

Nigel Fern  
Comet 845

### **Caption Competition**

Prize to be discovered in Norah's store!

Please submit a suitable caption for the cover image of Andy being presented with his snood by Peter who is using a boom to enforce social distancing, and is not trying to tip Andy back over into his latest newly-built Comet which has been finished in Ruby Red to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Entries by June 13th to me at [n.fern@ntlworld.com](mailto:n.fern@ntlworld.com) including delivery address.

It has been suggested that we have a regular Photo + Caption competition, possibly H+N's loft is creaking under the load! Please let me have any 'dubious', 'amusing' or 'down right daft' Comet images for inclusion.

### **Where are they now?**

As we near the 40th birthday of Comet1, I often wonder where those early Comets are and if they still in regular use. If you or a member of your club has an early Comet, up to Comet 50 say, please let me know together with a brief history, especially if it is a one owner boat.

### **Classifieds**

Comet 464 is on sale, see the website for details.

## Chairman's Report

Now that the national lockdown is easing, I hope that this copy of Perihelion finds you all in good health and that you are looking forward as much as I am to when we can all meet up again and enjoy sailing and racing our Comets in good company. As long as everything holds to their intended course, the first opportunity will be at Carsington on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June. At the time of writing, most of the events which were to be held in April and May have been re-scheduled for later in the season (please see the website for the new dates) and it is hoped that Attenborough and Shearwater can also accommodate us at a convenient date in their club programmes.



So far this year, the Committee has held an on-line meeting via Zoom on three occasions, and I think that after getting used to it, we have found it to be a practical and convenient means of discussing and organising the Association's business under the present restrictions (which is also not without its humorous side!).

Also during this period, the Association had a stand at the RYA Virtual Dinghy Show and we enjoyed live "chats" with members of the public enquiring about the Comet. A wide range of electronic documents and short videos about the Comet and the Association were available on the stand for visitors to enjoy. We judged the event to be a success and I am grateful to Chris Robinson for organising the stand and to all the Association members who contributed to the material made available and who supported the stand over the two days. Our attention is now already turning to next year's show which is to be held at Farnborough – fingers crossed! This will be a more accessible venue and I look forward to meeting you on our stand.

Preparations are well in hand for the Association Championships at Winsford Flash when the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Comet dinghy will be celebrated. You should have all received by now a snood organised by Norah Jagers also as part of this anniversary celebration. If you are planning to sail at the National Championships at Bala over the August Bank Holiday weekend then I would encourage you to get on and book your accommodation.

The discounted annual subscription for this year runs out shortly. So if you have not already renewed your membership, then please do so, and as I wrote in my recent email to you all, we want to hear from you about what else you think the Association should be doing for its membership.

Let's hope the vaccination programme continues to reap benefits. I look forward to seeing you out on the water in the not too distant future.

Peter Mountford  
Comet 864

## Secretary's Report

Hi all,

The sun is out and things are looking sunny again. Not only in the garden but on the sailing front. Even though we have had to reschedule the beginning of the season we are hoping for our open meetings to commence in June. The first meeting being Carsington on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> June (Covid permitting).

We have been having Zoom meetings to keep the Comet Association going through the pandemic and I think they have been very productive and maybe a new norm for us.

The new deadline for membership has been stretched to May 31<sup>st</sup> allowing sailors to take advantage of the reduced membership if they were members in 2020.

Norah is busy distributing snoods to all class members in our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year. We are hoping to have a dinner at the Association Championships at Winsford SC on the weekend of 17/18 July to celebrate and hoping to present John Sturgeon with his Chairman leaving present which has not been able to be done yet.

Keep looking on the website and Facebook page for updates!

So looking forward to catching up with everybody.

See you all soon.

Liz

Please see the website for the, unfortunately still, provisional event programme.



## ***Builder's Report***

It's fair to say not a lot has happened at Comet Dinghies since I last reported in late November. Before Xmas I had collected a nearly new Comet from Chipstead in Kent for a small repair job. In March, an essential business trip was made to deliver it back and collect another from the same club for a similar repair.



Like last Spring, I decided to build a Comet for stock. I always have the materials and it kept me busy for a couple of weeks which was nice after a pretty quiet winter. Since Easter, things are picking up as each week goes by. We've managed to sell six White Xtras so far this year which isn't bad considering the winter we've had.

The majority of Comets out there are now 25-35 years old. Roughly 100 Comets were built each year in the late 80's and early 90's. Invariably the rigging on these older boats gets "modified" and can sometimes lead to problems. The rigging may still work but is not as good as it could easily be. If you think your rigging isn't performing as well as it might, e-mail some pictures and phone me for a chat.

Like a lot of Comet sailors, I can't wait to see old faces as well as new ones at the Open Meetings. I'm definitely going to Winsford and Bala, and if I haven't sold the stock Comet you might even find me near the back of the fleet. Until then enjoy sailing your Comet.

Andy

## Trophies, prizes and mementoes.

Whenever I think of trophies I'm reminded of that Tom Lehrer's song –“ and there's 10 stuffed heads in my trophy-room right now: 2 game wardens, 7 hunters and a cow.” So far none of these items have made their way into any Comet trophy cabinets.

As you may know, I've been asked to be the stop-gap trophy buyer until a proper one comes forward. What you may not know is that this is how I came to join the CCA committee in the first place. We were at my daughter's first National Championships – at Sutton Bingham – and after the AGM several people came up to me to suggest that I took on the job of Trophy Buyer as no-one had come forward. It didn't seem like a big job, so I said OK. Much to my surprise, when the next edition of Perihelion came out I found that I was on the committee.

In the early 1990s I had to go out to shops and studios to find things. Luckily there was a warehouse locally which specialised in glassware, especially end-of-line cut-glass items. So my early offerings were decanters, paper-weights and glasses. One of the first challenges was to find some perpetual trophies for the newly created Aphelions. I found a chap who did engraving who had catalogues of trophies. He found 3 cups which were “going cheap” and which did not need to be polished. They served us well for 20 years, by which time the plinths were covered with names, and they were pensioned off a few years ago.

Other people took over the job when I picked up the role as Secretary and each one brought their own flair and initiative into play. However, on more than one occasion in the intervening years no-one has come forward to sort out the trophies and the job has reverted to the Chairman and Secretary. With computers and the internet Henry and I were able to create some much more personal items. For instance, in 2005, the Aphelion mementoes were pen-pots which featured a photograph of the recipient. In 2009 we made mouse-mats (**for those members that do not know what a mouse mat was please see the appended explanation**) which featured photographs of all of the qualifiers for the relevant Aphelion. For some years we created desk diaries, or wall-calendars which made use of some of the photographs which I've taken over the years.

I recall a couple of mishaps along the way. The engraver didn't finish the work of the championships at Steeple Bay until the day before and I didn't think to check his work. I should have remembered that my hand-writing isn't very legible and the engraving announced that the event was at Steeple Bay! Once, for an event at Staunton Harold, I thought that I'd use their preferred supplier, Tutbury Crystal. I asked for 3 pint beer mugs, engraved 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> helm, and 4 half-pint beer mugs engraved 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> helm. When they arrived the half-pint mugs were engraved 1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>. We still have the spares – Tutbury was very good about rectifying their mistake – so Henry can pretend that he did come first!

My first job this time around has been to find a memento for all of you to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Comet. I hope that you'll find it useful, either as a face-covering or to keep your neck warm, or any of the other myriad ways of wearing a snood.

Norah

**Mouse mat - the early computer 'mice' where 'ball' driven, each mouse had a ball which obviously rolled when moved, this movement was picked up by two sensors in the mouse. This data was fed into the computer along with any control 'clicks'. Unfortunately the mice became erratic due to the build up of fluff and any debris from the desk surface on the ball and around the sensors. This had to be regularly cleaned off. This build up was reduced by the introduction of mouse mats which had a special surface that reduced the build up of dirt. The introduction of modern Optical mice, that use light to sense the movement, did away with the need for a mouse mat as there are no longer any balls in the mice!**

## Mystery Package

A package arrived this morning with a big Comet Class Association logo on the front!

Intriguing. Package felt squishy. Even more intriguing. Opened package.

Black material with the Comet logo on it. This is too much. What is it?

Is this a flag to fly from the mast tip? Have Comets taken to piracy? Ah—all is revealed!

Instructions on the back of the package!

Fantastic - thank you to the Comet Association!

A multitude of ways to wear it. Hair cover and hair tie are no use to me!

More like sunshield.

Maybe at the next Open meetings we should all have to wear them in different ways (I can think of one or two other sailors who need to wear it as a blindfold to slow them down!!)

Dave Waymont



©Bellamy family

## FURTHER MEMORIES OF NATIONALS

Having read the interesting item by Chris Robinson in the last issue, I suddenly realised to my surprise that I had been present at them and more memories started up!

Aylesbury was windy and I have a nice photo of 55 Orbit planing fast across the water. The reason there was no report was that there was no newsletter at the time! The first issue came out in 1987 and, by then, we were looking forward with a report from Ian Hylton of his efforts in the Round Sheppey Race. First prize at the event of a nice little barometer was provided by Andy Simmons together with automatic election to the position of Chairman of the Association. If only I had known in advance!

Ardleigh is a fair sized reservoir near Colchester and the event was held in conditions that would have prevented racing at Gunfleet nearby on the sea. The Club had arranged for live TV coverage by ITV East Anglia cameras which were well positioned by a gybe mark off the club site and they certainly showed off the available range of hull colours to advantage. The event was won by Chris Sinclair, a young sailor from Chipstead, making his mark before moving to the USA for work that was a loss to the class.

Hunts was a very pleasant light wind event at a good Comet venue and I seem to remember the election of a certain young man from Aylesbury as our Chairman and a very good choice. It was the first time that I had seen a number of the new Xtra rigs in action but, whilst looking well balanced to sail, they were no match for the Comet rig in the conditions.

Waldringfield was an excellent venue, even if not a Comet sailing club, and giving the impression of an inland venue but with an interesting tidal flow. It was very good for spectators, with the course close by, on the bank and we spend some time happily chatting with the Wilkins whilst watching the racing.

Weymouth, with the Sailing Centre on Portland, was a real pleasure for me as it was over 50 years since I had last been there for my Sea Cadet Petty Officer course at HMS Osprey. The biggest interest in August 1958 was to see the USN nuclear submarine 'Nautilus' come into the harbour after completing the first voyage under the North Pole. It was quite a sight for youngsters and a very considerable achievement.

This was a windy event and it was particularly good to see all the Comet dinghies racing together at the same venue, suitably separated on the water and then joining up for an enjoyable dinner afterwards. Of course, this was all a minor prelude for the serious stuff of the Olympics at the same venue in 2012 where the UK squad did very well.

Then, we went off for a very pleasant visit to Norah and Henry

Happy days but it does all seem a long time ago.

Keith Lamdin.

## SAILING YOUR COMET - Part 1

Copied, tidied and produced by Henry Jagers from Perihelion 8 (September 1988) from the Keith Lamdin original.

Having considered the principles of sail theory and control settings this article is the first of a short series aimed at improving the sailing of your Comet in the various conditions we encounter.

The articles will cover:-

- sailing to windward,
- sailing downwind,
- controlling the boat,
- sea sailing,
- tides and currents,
- wind shifts.

Before going into the details of sailing in any specific manner there are some definitions not previously covered in my articles and some general points about setting your Comet up for sailing which need to be covered.

### DEFINITIONS:

a) Weather and Lee helm: The statement of whether a boat is carrying weather or lee helm is a question of balance between the position of the centre of effort (CE) of the sail and the centre of lateral resistance (CLR) of the hull and its foils. Simply put, if the centre of effort of the sail is behind the centre of resistance of the hull, largely controlled by the centreboard, then the boat will have a tendency to be twisted and turned towards the wind. This will require the helm to be held to weather of the boats centre line in order to bear the boat back off the wind and maintain a straight line course and hence the term weather helm, (fig 1).

Conversely, with the centre of effort in front of the centre of lateral resistance, the boat will have a tendency to slew and bear away from the wind and require lee helm in order to maintain a given course, (fig 2).

In the extreme, either case is damaging primarily because of the extra drag resistance created by the rudder being held permanently at an angle to the course being sailed and acting effectively as a brake on the boat's progress. An ideally balanced boat has the centres of effort and resistance roughly in line vertically and a rather neutral helm with, ideally, a very slight amount of weather helm which will tend to aid the helmsman in sailing as close as possible to the wind when beating.

The Comet, with its single sail set well forward in the boat, appears to be naturally well balanced with a generally neutral helm and being easy to control. However, dependent on the sail control settings, some weather helm can be experienced when sailing to windward and, in stronger winds, may well become excessive leading ultimately to broaching and capsize.

b) Apparent Wind: In looking at sail theory and the setting of the sail controls I considered the wind as if it was coming from one fixed direction, the true wind, which is, in fact, only true whilst the boat and rig is stationary. Once the boat is moving, it creates a wind equal in speed and of opposite direction to its own movement and course. This induced wind (I) then interacts with the true wind (T) to create an apparent wind (A) which will lie between the true and induced winds in proportion to their strength, (fig 3).

The positioning of the sail relative to the centre line of the boat in motion is actually dependent on

the apparent wind as being the wind shown by a burgee and felt by the sail. The direction of the apparent wind is most affected by changes of boat speed on a reach, particularly in planing conditions, but there is still some effect on the beat and run largely in light winds when the boat speed is relatively a larger proportion of the true wind speed, (fig 4).

c) Sail Twist: The angle of attack of the sail is not constant through its height to the peak but widens slightly as the sail twists towards the peak, (fig 5). This is quite natural and advantageous to a limited degree as the angle of the apparent wind also widens slightly towards the mast head due to the slightly increased velocity of the true wind away from the frictional effects at water level, (fig 6). However, the effect of sail twist needs to be controlled, particularly in stronger winds, and one use of the kicking strap, in addition to controlling mast bend and sail depth, is to reduce sail twist by holding the boom end down and tightening the leech of the sail.

There is a relatively greater wind gradient between water level and mast head in lighter winds and, in these conditions, reduced kicking strap tension will naturally allow an acceptably greater amount of sail twist.

**SETTING UP THE BOAT:** The Owners Handbook supplied with the Comet by AMS Marine gives the basic guidance necessary to initially start sailing and the following tips are intended to expand on certain areas which are required to obtain improved performance from the boat.

a) Wind Indicators:- It is essential that you are well aware at all times of the wind direction reaching the boat and the air flow around the sail. I use three forms of wind indication to help in sailing the boat.

Firstly, I have a soft burgee fitted to the mast head, in my case through a hole drilled in the top mast plug although a better arrangement is with tape around the mast top and inside the sail sleeve. This burgee shows the apparent wind at the mast head and, being soft, gives an indication of wind strength which is particularly useful in light winds.

Secondly, I have a wind vane indicator fitted at deck level and a more recent version fits on a collar around the mast at gooseneck level. Both these indicators are directly in the helmsman's line of sight when sailing and show the apparent wind at water level. My vane indicator has secondary arms which I arrange at an angle from the centre line of the boat which is approximately the angle at which I normally sail the Comet to windward. This gives me a simple, if crude, guide for beating where the vane should roughly coincide with the secondary arm. If the vane points inside the arm then I may be pointing too close and if the vane points outside the arm then I may be too far off the wind.

Finally, I have tell-tale wind flow indicators attached to the sail itself which will show the direction in which the wind is affected by and flows across the shape of the sail. The number of tell-tales is a matter of preference but I have two fitted at Approximately one-third and two-thirds height and about 18 inches to 2 feet / 45cm to 60cm back from the luff. These are the main guides as to the air flow as it starts around the aerofoil and it may be of use to have two at similar heights attached to the leech as a check for air flow leaving the sail. The use of the tell-tales will be covered in the sailing articles but basically the key is the leeward tale which shows the critical attachment of air around the back of the sail. If the sail is sheeted too close to the centre line for a specific direction of apparent wind then the air flow will not adhere to the sail but will separate and cause the tell-tale to collapse rather than stream with the air.

b) Control Lines:- From the articles on sail theory and the proper use of the control lines it should now be fairly clear as to the principles of setting a given sail shape for specific wind conditions.

However, once you have established the preferred settings for your own requirements, there is always the problem of repeatability in the settings. Unless you are certain in your ability to judge the required settings before and during a race it is well worth calibrating your boat for the settings which you find through trial and error to be best suited for yourself and the boat.

Calibration can be recorded, in the form of numbered strips stuck on the boom and mast at the outhaul and cunningham control points or, more simply, with marker lines on the spars to coincide

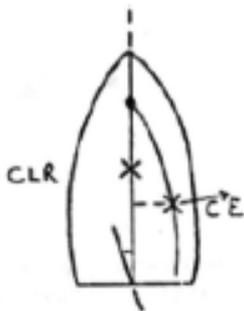


Fig 1  
WEATHER HELM

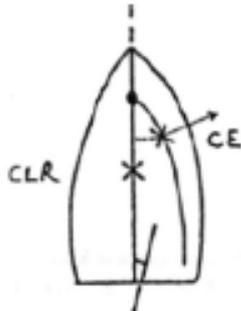


Fig 2  
LEE HELM

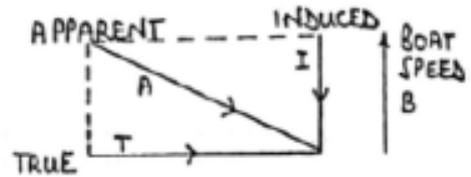


Fig 3  
APPARANT  
WIND

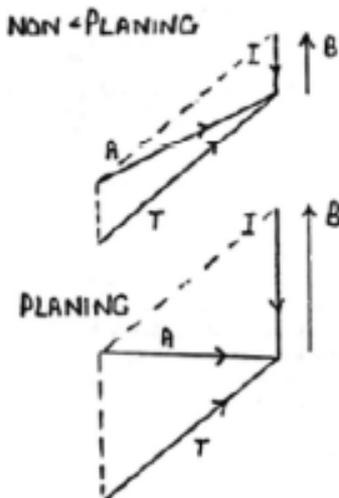


Fig 4

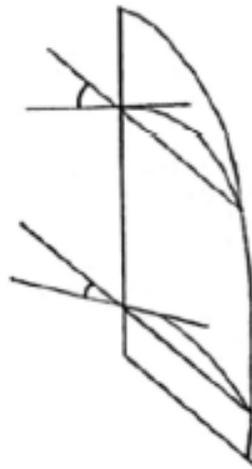


Fig 5  
SAIL TWIST

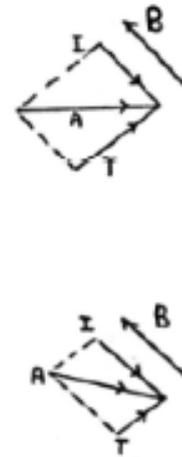


Fig 6  
WIND  
GRADIENT



Fig 7

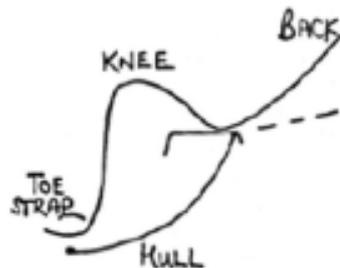


Fig 8

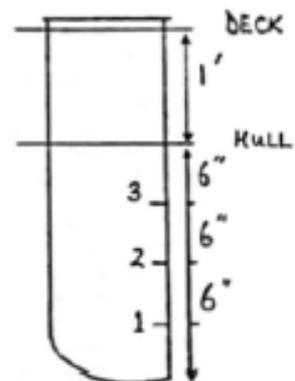


Fig 9

with settings for the three basic conditions.

In addition to such calibration, it is extremely useful to be easily able to adjust the settings of cunningham, kicker and outhaul at any point during a race. The control line purchases as supplied new from AMS Marine are certainly adequate for all normal sailing purposes but may not be fully adjustable in more extreme conditions whilst racing where easy and instant response is required. I find the kicker purchase, with the swivelling block feed at deck level is perfectly adequate but I prefer to add a 2:1 purchase on the cunningham control and to double the outhaul purchase to 4:1 advantage.

The cunningham is most simply achieved by fixing a small block to the down haul cringle at the tack of the sail and passing the control through this block back to deck level.

The outhaul is achieved by either fixing a double block to the clew cringle and a single block on either side of the boom end fittings or by a cascade system of another single block positioned mid-boom with the outhaul line in two parts.

c) Toe Straps:- One very nice feature of the Comet as supplied is the provision of a simple adjustment facility to the length of the toe strap. To be able to sail the boat properly, particularly in any wind, it is essential to have the length of the toe strap properly set to the most comfortable and effective position.

I set my toe strap such that, with the strap over my feet at the instep, the back of my knees fit comfortably to the rounded inner edge of the side deck. This allows my lower thigh to sit out on the side deck with my backside firmly wedged outside the boat and avoids any tendency to slide back into the boat through the pull of the mainsheet. In this position, I can sit out for lengthy periods without undue stress on the back which remains fairly upright and is only leant out further and more horizontal to the water to power the boat through stronger gusts, (fig 7). Having set the strap to the right position for your length of leg then do not forget to set the shockcord to hold the toe strap tight and clear of the cockpit floor.

It is a mistake to set the strap such that you are sitting with your backside on the side deck and attempting to hold the boat upright solely by leaning back as this puts undue strain on the back and stomach muscles, (fig 8).

d) Centreboard and Rudder:- These two foils are essential to the proper performance of the boat and must be maintained in perfect condition in order to avoid any unnecessary water disturbance and resulting drag.

The rudder must lock down very positively under the shockcord and the wing nut should be tightened to avoid any possibility of vibration at speed.

The centreboard must be positively held in any required position by tightening the retaining shock cord and you may find it helpful to mark the board for 1/4, 1/2 and 3/4 positions, (fig 9).

## ***COMET SPARES, REPAIRS AND ACCESSORIES***

Don't forget all spares and accessories are held in stock and can often be with you in less than 24 hours if you order in the morning.

New Dinghies / Sails and Spares - a selection is always in stock.

<b>Comet</b>	<b>£5400</b>
<b>Comet Xtra</b>	<b>£5500</b>
<b>Comet White Xtra</b>	<b>£5470</b>

<b>Standard Sail</b>	<b>£360</b>
<b>Standard Sail with Zipper</b>	<b>£390</b>
<b>Zippered Sail Conversion Kit</b>	<b>£30</b>
<b>Mylar Xtra Sail</b>	<b>£430</b>
<b>White Xtra Sail</b>	<b>£390</b>
<b>White Xtra Sail + Reefing kit etc</b>	<b>£465</b>

<b>Bottom Mast</b>	<b>£175 - £195 depending on Rig and Specification</b>
<b>Top Mast</b>	<b>£100 - £115 depending on Rig and Specification</b>
<b>Boom</b>	<b>£160 - £165 depending on Rig and Specification</b>

A full spare parts price list is now available to download from our web page -[www.cometdinghies.com](http://www.cometdinghies.com)

### **Repairs**

Accident damage and refurbishing gladly undertaken.

Write, phone or e-mail but include a daytime phone number.

### ***Comet Dinghies :***

***Unit 4 Valley View Business Park***

***Ashreigney***

***Devon EX 18 7 ND***

***Tel 01769 520545 Mobile 07860 847845***

***e-mail [cometdinghies@btconnect.com](mailto:cometdinghies@btconnect.com)***

# new for old

Ever broken your old mast or ripped a sail and been told by your insurance company that you're not covered for a new replacement?

At Noble we know how important it is to replace your breakages quickly with new gear so, with our standard new for old policy on all spars and sails damaged beyond repair,

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