

Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association

Perihelion 140

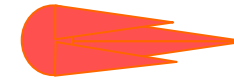
Please send your contributions for the next issue of Perihelion by

July 29th 2023

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PERIHELION 139



Chasing the Lightnings at Up River YC - © John Butler

***Comet Class Association
Newsletter***

Spring 2023

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For Sale



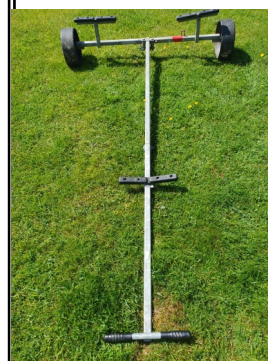
Comet 188

Built 1983 and all in good condition for year. No significant hull damage, 3 Original sails all good condition and usable, most recent one particularly good. Mostly new ropes and lines. Dagger board, rudder and stock in good condition. Fitted road cover.

Bramber galvanised combination trailer, launching trolley with replacement solid tyres. Currently at Dittisham Sailing Club, near Dartmouth.

£875. ONO

Phone 07753 121425



Used Break-back launching trolley in reasonable condition. Delivery to an Open or Championships possible. £50 ovno

Nigel Fern

Phone 07812 444982

Club		Up River Yacht Club							
Date		21/05/2023							
Boat No.	Helm	Club	Sail type	R1	R2	R3	Total	O/A	
377	Eddie Pope	OgSC	Xb	3	7	1			4
84	Mike Ettershank	URSC	S	2	2	2			4
867	Chris Robinson	BuSC	S	1	6	RTD			7
358	Tobias Hamcox	EoSC	S	9	4	3			7
869	Bob Dodds	CMSC	Xw	7	1	RTD			8
597	Ben Palmer	BWSC	S	6	3	6			9
178	Alex Gore	URSC	Xw	5	5	4			9
788	Andy Dale	EoSC	S	4	8	7			11
759	Grace Caton	EoSC	S	8	11	5			13
77	Alexander Johnson	EoSC	S	10	9	8			17
864	Peter Mountfod	SHSC	Xw	11	10	DNS			21
433	Stephen Dale	EoSC	S	12	13	9			21
845	Nigel Fern	SHSC	Xw	13	12	DNS			25



Eddie Pope takes the win.
©John Butler

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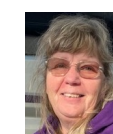
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Editorial

The double header at Eyott and Up River, whilst normally outside my travelling parameters, made sense and off I went. As they say Time and Tide wait for no-one. Well, we had to wait for the tide! Please see Andy Dale's report on Eyott and the personal offerings by Chris Robinson and Eddie Pope on Up River. Needless to say, as usual, I didn't trouble the scorers!!



The Baltic Wharf Comet Open has had to be moved to the 8th of July due to an event clash. Anyone who is considering entering this event should see the BWSC page in the Events section of the website for the latest on Bristol's Clean air zone.

Plans for the Nationals are quite advanced and online entry will be available shortly. Once this goes live Eddie will add further information to the events section of the website.

Entry cost will be £50, to include a 2 course meal (special dietary needs can be accommodated) after the AGM on Sunday and the tea/cakes after prize giving on Monday. Free camping and campervan parking are available Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights. It might be possible to have a practice sail on the Friday night - this is a club sailing and paddleboard night, but no racing takes place then. Other food can be purchased at the club and there is a well stocked bar.

Y&Y had the following article see - <https://www.yachtsandyachting.com/news/259274/What-was-intriguing-at-the-RYA-Dinghy-Show-2023>

The Comet class used a touch of humour to draw the eye towards a great

Up River

Race 1 - led in style throughout by Chris Robinson in his standard rig. Started at the club line using a light system. A really long beat downstream against the tide, then the course was in a wider part of the river. (Can't remember who was 2nd, but I think it was Ben or Michael, who held this position throughout). Eddie Pope managed to gain an overlap on Andy Dale just before the final mark to pip him for 3rd.

Race 2 - the start was critical - being at the pin end enabled an early tack to the shore out of the tide. Thereafter passing opportunities were limited. Bob Dodds found his form for a comfortable win. (I was too far back to see what else was going on). The course started in the wider part of the river downstream and ended at the club line.

Race 3 - a number of competitors were in a position to win the event. The start on the club line was tricky because the tide had started to go out. Bob and Chris were judged to be over the line, but did not find this out until they had started up the beat. They both retired, because they would have been too far behind after re-starting. Eddie and Ben battled up the first beat, but Eddie did not spot the first mark. By the time he realised he had gone past it and returned he was back in 4th or 5th. A very long run followed. Ben sailed down the far bank out of the tide, followed by several others. Michael (local knowledge) and a few others sailed down the near bank out of the tide. Eddie sailed down the middle on his own and despite being in more tide appeared to have a speed advantage - the wind could have been steadier and stronger there. By the leeward mark Eddie held a comfortable lead, which he held until the end of the race. Michael maintained his second place. By virtue of his win in race 3 Eddie won the event on count back from Michael. Chris was 3rd overall. It was interesting to see that the standard rig was highly competitive in the fresh conditions.

Eddie Pope

The tides limit the racing time at Up River so to get all the races in before the tide went out the Race Officer set all three courses to be run back-to-back. The first race was to take us down stream against the tide, the second race would take us back as the tide turned and the final race would be in the vicinity of the club house. Like the day before we had a good wind with marginal planning on a broad reach.

The first race had a reaching start against the tide. Therefore, on the first leg the best start had to be near one of the banks. Based on previous Opens I thought the leeward bank would be best and when I watched the Lightning Open start five minutes before us I noticed the top local Lightning helms chose this option. Knowing the tide was against us I felt comfortable sailing close to the start line and consequently I was slightly ahead of the nearby boats at the start. This turned out to be crucial as it allowed me to sail close to the leeward shore out of the tide without getting any dirty wind. The very long first leg allowed me to pull away from the boats behind. Further on we came to a couple of bends and then did a couple of short laps before the finish. This required some decisions on when to cross the river either to get on the inside of the bend or across to the next mark. I didn't make any significant errors and so maintained my lead until the finish.

I didn't do as well in the second race. I elected to start close to the Committee boat out of the tide, but so did everyone else. I was too far to windward and got pushed out and so I started almost last. In this race we did a short lap before running back up the river to the finish. I managed to make a few places on the lap, but by the time we came to the long run back it was high water and there was no significant tide. Therefore, it wasn't too critical where you sailed and the with a consistent wind everyone sailed a similar speed and there weren't any changes in position.

Bob Dodds got the best start and stayed ahead throughout the race to win.

The start for the third race was the same as the first race, but this time the tide was taking us over the line. Therefore, the best place to start was in the centre. I was aware the tide was taking us over the line and headed back across in the last few moments before the gun. Bob, who was close to me, did the same but was more conservative which gave me the better

campaign to raise awareness of prostate cancer. The boat name was enough to make me scan a QR code and see the [owner's Facebook page](#), and from there to prostatecanceruk.org/risk-checker to check my own risk level.

If anyone is looking for Comet spares then please see the For Sale section of the Classifieds section of the website for the Official Comet Dinghies Spares parts list.

Nigel Fern
Comet 845

Chairman's Report

Chair's mutterings

It was unfortunate that the first Open Meeting of the 2023 season at Nottingham had to be called off because of the high level of the Trent coupled with a lack of wind. The club did an excellent job in informing entrants and the Association of their decision and I am not aware of anyone having a wasted journey. The Open Meeting will now be held on Sunday 10th September.



By the end of May, five events have been held, and I am pleased to say that I have managed to get to all five of them, and very enjoyable they have all been. Thanks to a decision by the Race Officer to delay the start of the first race at Burghfield until after an early lunch when a breeze had filled in, three races were sailed in conditions which provided a gentle start to the Open Meeting season. May saw the first two of five “double events” (a pair of Open Meetings held on the two days of a weekend in roughly the same geographical region) organised for the 2023 season:- Fishers Green coincided with a certain event going on in central London at the same time, followed on the next day by Hawley Lake. Two weeks later saw the second “double” event:- we launched at Up River to compete in the first ever Comet Open Meeting organised by Eyott SC, and Up River's own Comet Open Meeting was held on the following day.

The second “Zoom” Committee meeting of 2023 had to be spread over two evenings because my home internet connection decided during the first evening to refuse to co-operate. It was decided not to go to Weymouth for the 2024 Nationals because of the costs and instead take up the offer to hold the event at Merthyr Tydfil. An Open Meeting has been held on this very large reservoir every year and it is a superb sailing venue set in glorious countryside.

Nigel Fern has decided to retire from Committee membership and as News Editor later this year. As well as producing the annual output of Perihelions and managing the website, the Association is most grateful for the significant developments he has achieved:- converting Perihelion to

Up River Comet Open Sunday 21st of May

I am indebted to Chris Robinson and Eddie Pope for their comments on the Up River Comet Open. Although I was there I was, as usual, too far back to be able to comment on the action!! (Ed.)

Up River Yacht Club is on the River Crouch. With the tide out the river is a trickle a couple of metres wide and only knee deep. However, with the tide in the water depth increases up to about five metres and the width is a few hundred metres across. In addition, the sailing area extends a long way down stream where the river becomes much wider. With the right wind this allows some very long legs – longer than the Baltic Wharf Head of the Harbour Race. As the river is mostly surrounded by marsh the wind is steady too, comparable to the very steady winds found at Mudeford. With such a large tidal range the tides are quite strong, so this makes it very different to the lake/reservoir sailing most Comet sailors are used to.

This year's Up River Open was the day after the inaugural Open at Eyott, which is also on the River Crouch just up river of Up River YC! As all the competitors had sailed at Eyott's Open we had some practice sailing on the tidal waters.



Battling the tide!
©John Butler

As the boats finished one by one they all came along side the grassy bank, we pulled the boats up on the grass and sat in the sun catching our breath having a very well deserved cuppa before jumping back in the boats catching the out going tide heading back to Up River for a beer.

Andy Dale
C788

Club		Eyott Sailing Club							
Date		20/05/2023							
Boat No.	Helm	Club	Sail type	R1	R2	Total	O/A	Pos	
84	Mike Ettershank	URSC	S	2	2	4		1	
597	Ben Palmer	BWSC	S	1	4	5		2	
788	Andy Dale	EoSC	S	6	1	7		3	
377	Eddie Pope	OgSC	Xb	4	5	9		4	
869	Bob Dodds	CMSC	Xw	3	7	10		5	
867	Chris Robinson	BuSC	S	5	6	11		6	
77	Alexander Johnson	EoSC	S	rtd	3	16		7	
178	Alex Gore	URSC	Xw	8	9	17		8	
358	Tobias Hamcox	EoSC	S	10	8	18		9	
864	Peter Mountford	SHSC	Xw	7	12	19		10	
759	Grace Caton	EoSC	S	9	11	20		11	
845	Nigel Fern	SHSC	Xw	11	10	22		12	
433	Stephen Dale	EoSC	S	12	13	25		13	

an on-line publication, developing the monthly Newsletter, and together with Paul Hinde, designing and building the new Comet Class Association website.

The Committee has recognised that the scope of the News Editor role has grown considerably in the last few years and that the roles of Perihelion Editor, managing the website and producing the Newsletter could be divided between more than one person. The Committee also recognises the vital importance of maintaining communication with the membership and keeping members informed of developments and it has been suggested that separation of these roles may be an opportunity to reconsider how this communication is maintained. For instance, one suggestion has been to include more material in the monthly Newsletters and reduce Perihelion to a single issue at the end of each season. Another suggestion has been to combine the role of website editor with that of managing the Association's Facebook pages.

The Committee would welcome views from the membership on this topic by including it as a discussion item at the Annual General Meeting to be held at Ogston during the August Bank Holiday weekend. If you are unable to get to this meeting and have some suggestions to make, then please send them to Liz Hossell by the 30th July.

I hope you continue to enjoy your Comet sailing in 2023, and I look forward to seeing you at an event at some point during the rest of the season.

Peter Mountford
C864

Secretary's Report

The Committee have had a meeting in May and here is a brief synopsis of matters discussed.

Dinghy Show 2023 a very successful event. The Committee have decided to also attend RYA Dinghy and Watersports Show in 2024 (24/25 February) where we will have a stand shared with Andy.



Nigel Fern is to resign from the Committee at the AGM this year as Perihelion/Website and Newsletter Editor. He will however continue until the end of the year with the final Perihelion after Staunton Harold Open Meeting. He has done this combined job for nine years. Peter Mountford expressed his thanks on behalf of the Committee to Nigel. We are now looking for a person or people to help fill these roles. Nigel will give full support for anybody who could help. You don't have to be on the Committee. If you are interested, please approach any Committee member, me or Nigel himself. Will be discussed at the AGM.

Nationals 2024 A discussion took place on the Nationals 2024. The Committee asked Members, but we didn't have a lot of response. It was decided that we would not join the Byte and Streaker class in Weymouth purely because of cost and not being able to guarantee enough boats to make it viable.

Merthyr Tydfil SC have offered to hold the Nationals instead. Eddie Pope negotiating at the moment with them.

Portsmouth Yardstick for Comet and Xtra. There has been a big discussion between the Committee and Clubs on the RYA reporting the standard Comet as 1210 and the Xtra rig on a Limited Data list as 1197. The Committee will be in discussions with the RYA.

Nigel is tidying up the Website. The results for 2023 so far are in the

Robinson (BuSC) and Alexander Gore (EySC) all fighting to chase them down on the windy run/reach down the course. Mike and Ben were slowly being caught by the chase group until a bit of bumper cars at the leeward mark put pay to any hope of catching the first two so Ben took the win followed by Mike, Bob and Eddie.

Race two was going to be a change of scenery for the Comets and sail up the creek and finish on Eyott's club line, the further up the creek you go the narrower, shallower and muddier it gets.

The race started off by doing one rounding of the same course for the first race then up the creek to Eyott.

Everyone started on the safe but boring starboard tack across the river apart from Andy Dale (EySC) and Alexander who crossed the line on port and headed inshore to the shallower water to get out of the strong current. This worked out well for the two of them as they got to the windward mark first and second with Mike close behind.

A lap of the river then up the creek, the creek is fairly narrow with muddy banks so plenty of opportunities for the centre board to dig in and taste a bit of Essex mud, Nigel Fern (SHSC) found one of the shallow spots and slowed down losing a bit a distance on the other Comets.

Andy, Mike and Alexander were the leading boats all the way up to the club where the course took them past the club round one more mark and across the line.

Andy did his best to throw the win away as he ran aground a boat length from the finish line ...(he should know better as been sailing there for 45 years!).



Andy held on followed by Mike and Alexander.

Eyott SC Comet Open

Saturday 20th May saw Eyott sailing club run its first ever Open event in the clubs 73 year history!

The event was put on the day before our neighbouring club Up River YCs Comet open to encourage people to travel and to have two days racing run from different clubs without having to pack boats up and travel in between as Up River had kindly let us use the club to launch and camp over on the Saturday.



Seven visitors joined the five club boats for racing on the tidal river Crouch.

Sunshine and wind was ordered in advance and that was delivered perfectly on time.

As most of the travelling Comets sail on still water having water that moves took a bit of getting used to, to start with, but they soon got the hang of it.

Due to Eyott being very tidal not much time is available so two back2back 45 minute races were put on by Eyott and what two races there were!

Race one started with an incoming tide in a decent breeze, Ben Palmer (BWSC) and Mike Ettershank (EySC) nailed the start to lead the fleet around the top mark's with Bob Dodds, Eddie Pope (OgSC) Chris

Members Area and as in rotation the Results for 2017 will be deleted.

Nottingham SC have announced a new date for their Open meeting which is Sunday 10th September along with their Enterprise fleet.

‘Paper work’ for the AGM will be circulated in early July so if you have any Motions to be discussed / voted on or any general items for discussion please let me have as soon as possible.

Hopefully our nice warm, breezy weather is here to stay and I will see you all soon.

Liz Hossell
Hon. Secretary

Builder's Report

I seem to have been quite busy since I last wrote. A new Comet (906) in the same super bright blue as the Dinghy Show one but with a waterline was delivered to Chipstead SC in April. I looked in at the Burghfield Open on the way where there was a good turnout for early season.



After Chipstead I headed North to Shustoke SC with a second-hand Comet. Twenty-seven years old but I converted it to a White Xtra and gave it a bit of a tidy up. I think that makes it six at Shustoke now and should grow long term. Don't forget their first Open Meeting in July.

I've just finished a fairly major repair on an elderly Comet, with new GRP mast tube and deck repair. I did an article and diagram about the potential wear and problems in a previous issue and maybe this could be put on the main website.

Due to the new Comets going out the door I thought it would be wise to build one for stock, a Sea Blue with waterline if anyone's interested.

As for spare parts and advice please spread the word. I think some people are even a bit embarrassed to phone and would rather order online from somewhere else! Which doesn't help my profits, but seriously, I'm here to help and make sure you get the correct parts.

Talking of parts, we are having a bit of trouble with one of our old suppliers. Hatches and storage bins have been replaced by an Allen hatch with a small storage bag attached to the lid. They seem to seal better and are easier to do up and undo. Another advantage is when the cover is on the boat the hatch can be left off, letting the boat breathe and dry which doesn't happen so well with a bin in place.

Another item is a new "captive pin" shackle. The original type were fine,

Fishers Green and Hawley Lake Comet Opens

Unfortunately, despite requests, I have not received a report from either venue and therefore can only publish the results.

Club Fishers Green Sailing Club

Date 06/05/2023

Boat No.	Helm	Club	Sail type	R1	R2	R3	R4	Total	O/A	Pos
377	Eddie Pope	OgSC	Xw	1	1	2	1	5	3	1
597	Ben Palmer	BWSC	S	5	2	1	2	10	5	2
800	Henry Jagers	BeSC	Xw	3	3	5	3	14	9	3
323	Annette Walter	WGCSC	S	2	5	4	5	16	11	4
864	Peter Mountford	SHSC	Xw	4	4	3	4	15	11	5
532	John Coppenhall	HuSC	S	6	6	6	6	24	18	6
41	Mark Smith	FGSC	S	7	7	7	7	28	21	7

Club Hawley Lake Sailing Club

Date 07/05/2023

Boat No.	Helm	Club	Sail type	R1	R2	R3	Total	O/A	Pos
377	Eddie Pope	OgSC	Xw	1	1	2	4	2	1
867	Chris Robinson	BuSC	Xw	4	5	1	10	5	2
800	Henry Jagers	BeSC	Xw	2	9	3	14	5	3
323	Annette Walters	WGCSC	S	5	3	6	14	8	4
597	Ben Palmer	BWSC	S	9	2	7	18	9	5
788	Andy Dale	EySC	S	10	4	5	19	9	6
614	Carol Butcher	HLSTC	Xw	8	6	4	18	10	7
231	Steve Gregory	FPSC	Xw	3	8	11	22	11	8
849	Tim Higgs	BuSC	Xw	6	11	8	25	14	9
864	Peter Mountford	SHSC	Xw	7	7	9	23	14	10
868	Helen Evans	SWSC	Xw	11	10	10	31	20	11

Club Burghfield Sailing Club
Date 21/04/2023

Boat No.	Helm	Age Category	Club	Sail type	R1	R2	R3	Total	O/A	Pos
377	Eddie Pope	Ancient Mariner	OgSC	Xw	1	1	1	3	2	1
597	Ben Palmer	Adult	BWSC	S	4	2	2	8	4	2
864	Peter Mountford	Ancient Mariner	SHSC	Xw	2	3	3	8	5	3
800	Henry Jagers	Ancient Mariner	BeSC	Xw	3	6	5	14	8	4
894	Jacky Stagg		BoSC	Xw	6	4	6	16	10	5
849	Tim Higgs	Ancient Mariner	BuSC	Xw	13	8	4	25	12	6
63	Chris Robinson		BuSC	S	8	5	7	20	12	7
779	Jackie Light		BoSC	Xw	5	13	8	26	13	8
231	Steve Gregory	Ancient Mariner	FPSC	Xw	10	7	9	26	16	9
400	John Sturgeon	Ancient Mariner	HLSTC	Xw	7	9	13	29	16	10
614	Carol Butcher	Ancient Mariner	HLSTC	Xw	9	14	10	33	19	11
639	Caroline Dean		BoSC	Xw	11	10	11	32	21	12
868	Helen Evans		SWSC	Xw	12	11	12	35	23	13
382	Roger Harrison	Ancient Mariner	ReSC	Xw	14	12	DNS	26	26	14
830	Mick Parnell	Ancient Mariner	BASC	S	15	15	14	44	29	15

but in recent years the tooling must be worn and they have been a bit difficult to “click”. The new type are a bit longer and work much better but are £4.61 instead of £2.50!

Anyway, summer’s here so get out and enjoy your Comet!

For the latest Spares list please the Association Web site.

Andy Simmons



Eddie Pope receiving the winner’s spoils from Chris Robinson.

©Steve Gregory

FITNESS - WE ALL NEED IT

I was really impressed with Pete Coop's article "How to Succeed" in the Autumn 2022 edition of Perihelion. Ben Palmer then followed this with excellent tuning tips in his article in the next edition of Perihelion.

Attempting to follow Pete's and Ben's advice would clearly be a good idea.

To start with you must make sure that your boat is fully competitive. This is easier said than done unless you buy a new boat. Perhaps the subject for an article in future?

I do however feel the need at this stage to add to Pete's and Ben's articles with some thoughts about "Fitness". Without a good level of "Fitness" their advice cannot be adequately implemented, even with the best Comet. There are two linked elements here, physical and mental fitness. What follows are my amateurish ramblings on these subjects. They might at least give you some amusement, if not food for thought.

Physical Fitness



There is of course no substitute for spending a lot of time out on the water, in a range of conditions and venues, in your chosen boat. This ensures that all the manoeuvres and settings required become second nature. However, this is not enough.

The top dinghy racers these days are true athletes. A couple of youngsters at my home club (Ogston) were Olympic campaigners based at WPNSA, and when they came back to Ogston they were performing at another level! I was also able to closely observe Olympians and other top helms in

After two races Eddie had won the event with two firsts. Peter was second with a second and third, but he could easily be caught by Ben who had a second or Henry who had a third. Jacky S was the leading lady with a fourth and sixth, but Jackie L with a fifth place could easily beat Jacky S with a good result in the last race.

The fleet had a short break ashore before race three. On their return to the water they found the wind beginning to lighten. A wind shift during the start sequence resulted in a heavily biased pin end. Ben went for a port tack start at the pin which paid off as he cleared the line cleanly and made the windward mark without tacking. The wind shift remained more or less permanent resulting in a very biased beat with the first reach becoming close hauled. As the wind dropped on the downwind legs of the first lap Eddie got past Ben and took a substantial lead. Ben was holding off Peter with Jacky S, Henry, Tim Higgs and Chris behind them. On the second lap these formed their own lead group following Eddie. The Race Officer elected to shorten the course at two laps before the wind died further. Approaching the final mark the lead group began to bunch. Eddie's lead was enough that he retained first, while Ben was able to keep ahead of Peter. However, there were place changes amongst the others in the lead group, with Tim rising to fourth place ahead of Henry.

Amongst the ladies Jacky S got into the lead group, finishing sixth, which ensured she finished ahead of Jackie L who led the rest of the fleet to the finish.

Overall, Eddie's three firsts gave him the win, while Ben's win over Peter in the last race ensured he took second place ahead of Peter in third and Henry in fourth. The good result by Jacky S in the last race ensured she won the ladies prize, but also propelled her to fifth place overall. The two Burghfield boats, Tim and Chris, were tied on points, but Tim's good result in the last race broke the tie in his favour and he was first Burghfield boat with sixth. Jackie L was second lady, with her good result in the last race giving her eighth overall ahead of Steve Gregory and John. These two tied on points and with equal placing the tie was broken on the last race which gave Steve ninth, with John tenth.

Chris Robinson

Burghfield Comet Open 22 April

Fifteen Comet sailors arrived at Burghfield Sailing Club for the Comet Open on Saturday 22nd April to find a becalmed reservoir with mist on the water. Race Officer James Anderson postponed the start until after an early lunch. This was a good decision as at the start of the race the wind filled in on cue to provide a steady breeze across the water. A square course was set which neatly avoided the islands.

The committee boat end of the line looked to be the most favoured end, but just before the start there was a wind shift that favoured the pin end. Those that spotted this and sailed down to the pin got the best start. The early leader was Henry Jaggars followed by Eddie Pope. On the second lap Eddie took the lead and Henry was then caught by Peter Mountford and Ben Palmer, although Henry was able to regain third place on the last lap.

A third of the fleet were women and in the first race the first two ladies to the first mark were Jackie Light and Jacky Stagg. However, Jacky S was on port and had to give way to Jackie L on starboard giving her the lead. Jacky S caught Jackie L on the second lap but her lead was short lived as Jackie L quickly regained the lead position.

In the second race the committee boat end was favoured and Chris Robinson started at this end, pushing John Sturgeon out in the process. However, it turned out that the route up the first beat determined who would be first to the windward mark, with the left-hand side of the beat being favoured. Eddie was first, followed by Peter and then Ben. A little rain appeared bringing with it some more wind. Ben caught Peter by the end of the first lap. There were no further changes in the top five who pulled away from the rest of the fleet.

Carol Butcher was on course to be the first lady to the first windward mark, but a wind shift put her below the lay line and a line of boats to windward prevented her from tacking to get around the mark. Jacky S followed by Jackie L took advantage and passed Carol. Jacky S got into the lead group and finished fourth overall ahead of Jackie L.

action at the Endeavour Trophy in 2021. At WPNSA there are exercise bikes, other exercise equipment and sports trainers - they are there for a reason.

The importance of physical fitness was first evidenced by the great Paul Elvstrom in the 1940s, who could out-hike all his competitors and won many titles. Hiking benches followed and I know people who have these at home. They can provide the stamina required to hike for long periods, without becoming so tired that it affects your race performance.

I have always been very active (some claim hyperactive) and for the last 35 years or so I have also been a gym member. I prefer regular core exercise classes, where I am motivated to at least equal the abilities of the other (younger) participants. I add some focused cardio-vascular activities such as spin (group cycling), circuits or HIIT (high intensity interval training). Sometimes I go to a yoga or pilates class, though I have poor flexibility in some areas (two hip replacements and an arthritic elbow don't help) - it's amazing how much you can sweat just holding a yoga pose! I try not to overdo my gym attendance, usually going every other day.

If this all sounds like agony to you then try a few suitable exercises at home, building up over time. I promise that it will help!

Light winds at our predominantly inland venues mean that hiking is often not required. Core strength and stamina are also important in light winds, because being hunched up in awkward positions can bring on cramp and other discomfort.

In summary, having a good level of physical fitness is critical to success. I have tried to eliminate weaknesses in this area, so I don't need to worry about my ability to sit out, hold awkward positions, or right the boat after a capsize.

Mental Fitness



My view is that mental fitness is a trickier area. Modern elite athletes use sports psychologists but we Comet helms can't afford them. Issues and improvements in mental health are not necessarily visible. I have so far failed to fully address some of my weaknesses in this area, but will continue to try.

Confidence is a critical aspect of mental fitness. You need to have a lot of confidence in your boat. Pete's and Ben's articles explained their preparation here. Of course the one area that cannot be underestimated is the importance of a really good mainsail - the boat's engine. I decided to keep my older Comet (377 - "Blue Moon" - 1990 vintage) instead of 804 which had won me two National Championships. This despite 377 having been regularly dragged up a Kent beach by a previous owner resulting in lots of hull scratches. I convinced myself that 377's hull rigidity, and the fact she had never leaked or required repair, meant she was a match for any other Comet out there, despite blemishes. In contrast 804 had leaked and been repaired, and seemed to have a more flexible hull.

Coincidentally I also run an old car (19 years) and campervan (26 years) which also have names. There is much less to worry about with these than owning a pristine boat or vehicle. Worry is bad for me! Nevertheless, I do ensure that my vehicles and boats are really well maintained.

You also have to develop confidence in your own Comet racing ability. This is harder, self-doubt is there in all of us. Being in good physical shape, having confidence in the boat, good racing results, plus spending a lot of time in the boat, all help with adding to confidence in ability.

Dinghy racing can be a stressful activity and everybody must be affected by this. It impacts our actions and the many decisions taken during the

race. I still find certain situations stressful and make mistakes as a result. I won't elaborate because it might help my competitors!

It is vital to learn from mistakes, make a mental note, think about what led to the mistake, then try to improve when that situation crops up again. Don't let mistakes distract you too much during the race though - they can be compensated for by capitalising on mistakes made by your fellow competitors.

It is critical to hold a high level of concentration at all times, not just within the boat but with what is going on around you. This is the area where I am most content with my level of mental fitness. I think that having good physical fitness might help with concentration, but I have taken up serious chess again to help with my thinking processes.

Maybe having a competitive nature is a mental fitness attribute? It seems to be something that people are born with. However, if a competitive person does not perform well it could have a big impact on confidence.

Above all, enjoy sailing! It is great to get afloat and leave behind life's troubles.

Eddie Pope