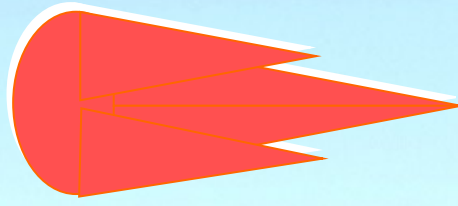


# **PERIHELION 143**



***Comet Class Association  
Newsletter***

**Spring 2024**

# ***NEWSLETTER NUMBER***

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## Editorial

First of all, I'd like to say a huge thank you to Nigel for all of his hard work as editor of Perihelion over the years - His dedication has been appreciated by many as they read through each edition of the club magazine. As a fairly new member to the association myself, I know how helpful and interesting the articles were to me and how they gave me a more rounded insight into the "Comet world".  
Thank you, Nigel.



So who is your new editor?

I am fairly new to sailing (well helming) having decided to be the one on the water rather than my former role as land crew / driver / accommodation organiser / food provider / financier etc to my son in the days of his Topper and Laser (ILCA) competitive sailing. In a similar manner to retirement planning, I needed to find a new way to fill my weekends and holidays when the teenage sensation left for university. I had loved being out and about on the topper or laser circuit, meeting people and visiting new venues in different corners of our country, so I decided to be the one sailing instead.

I began by competing in a few Dayboat events with Ken Baker (695) and then splashed out on a Comet to continue my venture into the sailing world. Not being the most natural helm, I have "moments" when things go well sandwiched between times when my lack of experience and know how are quite obvious! However, after a few months of club racing (well—following the others around) and with the support and encouragement from Ken and my other half, Graham, I entered my first Comet open event and loved it. I have sailed at various events over the last two years where I am constantly impressed with the friendliness and support of fellow comet sailors and their companions.

I am looking forward to catching up with you all at this years events. I am usually near the back of the fleet where I can keep an eye on everyone and pick up some handy hints! (well that's my excuse...)

As ever, please feel free to send any articles or race reports to me or any committee member for inclusion into future editions of Perihelion.

Helen Evans 868



## Chairman's Report



After a grim winter we are all looking forward to better weather for our 2024 sailing exploits. I was fortunate to choose a lovely warm spring day (rare!) with force 2 southerly winds for my first outing at Ogston SC in March. It was great to meet up with people at Ogston again, and I am also looking forward to seeing everyone at our Comet events.

Many thanks to Chris Robinson for organising things at the Farnborough Dinghy Show. A lot of work went into making this a successful weekend. Many Comet sailors and potential Comet sailors visited the stand, and it was lovely to have so many chats there.

A welcome development which coincided with the Show was the publication of the 2024 PY lists by the RYA. All Comet rigs are included on the Base List with a PY of 1210. There are however a couple of errors in the lists, which the RYA will be correcting.

Plans for the 2024 Championship events at Silver Wing and Merthyr Tydfil are well advanced. Once the online entry is available please sign up in good time so the clubs can get a good handle on numbers.

The 2025 Championship venues will be Gunfleet (Nationals) and Cransley (Associations). The racing at Gunfleet is highly tide-dependent, and the odds are probably against this taking place over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

Having been a past member of Littleton for approaching 30 years I am very pleased that the club is again going to host a Comet open in 2024. I am grateful to John Dean for volunteering to organise this. This means that we have actually increased the number of open meetings by comparison with 2023.

**EDDIE POPE**

## Secretary's Report

### **SECRETARY REPORT**

Just a few notes from the Committee Meeting held on 13 February via Zoom.

- We are welcoming Helen Evans to the General Committee. She has been co-opted on and will take up the Perihelion Editor position.
- Eddie reported another full programme of events for 2024. The Association Championships are at Silver Wing SC on the weekend of 11/12 May. Information is in Perihelion 143 and on the website. The Nationals are at Merthyr Tydfil SC over the August Bank Holiday. Accommodation bookings need to be done asap as no camping at the Club and a popular tourist area. Information will be on the MTSC website. The AGM will be anytime during the day on Sunday 25 August so all motions or nominations to me.
- Steve Gregory reported that membership was up for this year with 11 new members already. A reminder will be going out that fees are due by April 1st.
- Chris Robinson has organised the Dinghy Show for this year with the stand being manned by Committee members and members of the Association. Literature for the show was being trialled online due to the RYA looking for a more sustainable show for this year and going forward.
- As Chris has now taken on the Website and Communications post of the Committee, we are looking for somebody to take on the organisation of the Dinghy Show for 2025. Anybody interested please see Chris.
- Steve Bellamy is doing the Trophy buying for this year but we will need a new person with new ideas for 2025. Can you do this job! If so see a committee member for information or Steve himself.
- Nigel Fern has handed the website information to Chris Robinson who is updating information. Look on the site for everything you need to know as a member of the Association. Chris also does the newsletter so if you have anything you want to share with the Membership get in touch with him, or Helen Evans, our new Perihelion editor. Please check your spam/junk mail for emails from the Association.

The first Open Meeting of the season is at Nottingham SC on Sunday 14 April and Burghfield SC the week after. Let's hope for some warmer weather and favourable winds.

Hope to see you all soon!

Liz Hossell

[secretary@cometsailing.org.uk](mailto:secretary@cometsailing.org.uk)



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

Builders Report  
April 2024



It seems ages since you last heard from me, October in fact.

The stock Comet I sailed at Bowmoor was sold to Chipstead in November making 3 new ones there in 2023, half of the year's production! I think that makes 37 at Chipstead now.

The new Comet that went to Bartley S.C. in October is getting some rather good results which hopefully should mean a couple more there this year even if they are not new!

A new Comet was built late last year with a view of it going to the Dinghy Show if not sold beforehand.

This year, so far has been rather quiet. Some older Comets have changed hands and some of these have upgraded to the White Xtras which helps keep us going.

In anticipation of better times, I recently built another Comet for stock in the new Bright Blue. I'd rather build a few now rather than when the weather's great and I want a break from work. The red Dinghy Show boat has all the extras on so a deal could be done!

PY wise, it was great to see that all the Comet rigs are now the same PY; 1210.

Although the Comet Class is now 43 years old, there are still lots of people unaware of the Comet and how great it is!

I always need keen, enthusiastic owners, to sing the praises of the Comet to the uninitiated! Truth is a lot of middle-aged families are joining our sport and they weren't there at the Boat Shows all those years ago.

No more "mast-down" disasters since last years 5 incidents but they will happen as the years go by and as the old boats get even older. The definitive article I wrote is on the Class Website, click on "The Boat", "Comet Dinghies", then click on "Comet Mast Hole".

I'm also writing a new article in this newsletter about mast tubes.

After the winter we've had, things can only get better. Enjoy your Comets and spread the word.

Andy Simmons.

The full article and diagram are on the Class Website but here are some important "Golden Rules" and some new ideas.

### Prevention

1. Keep the boat as dry as possible inside.
2. Never store the boat bow down, over the winter, a leaky hatch can easily let in water which then collects around the mast tube/hull join.
3. Keep the boat slightly bow up so any water drains out the drain plug.
4. Ideally, make sure your hatch doesn't leak. Often the mounting screws have "stripped" in the deck and the sealant has come unstuck. If the hatch isn't damaged you could re-seal it by removing it, cleaning off the old sealant, drilling new holes or use machine screws and nuts on the stripped holes. Sand the GRP a bit to help the sealant stick. We now use a "sealant/adhesive" like "No More Nails" rather than a plain silicon sealant. We also now use Allen rather than RWO hatches which seem better but have a little storage bag rather than a bin for storage.
5. Another potential leak is at the front of the Daggerboard Slot, I've seen them wear through the deck GRP, through the filler and then through the daggerboard case. As soon as the daggerboard is moved up and down, water is pumped inside. This is easily repaired by a "Glassfibre filled Filler" from Halfords etc., filed back so the Daggerboard fits easily then ideally a coat of gelcoat. In rare cases the rear of the hull slot can be worn so bad it leaks.
6. Mast tube. As well as the usual check for wear at the bottom, another check for leaks and potential mast problems is to fill the mast tube with water and see if it disappears. If you have the new small hole drilled, then tape that up first! If the mast has worn badly downwards the water will come out underneath. The water may just go down halfway and stop, indicating a crack at that point or worse case, it goes right down to bottom draining into the hull. This can be cured by pouring a bit of resin down the tube and brushing it up the sides a couple of inches.

### The Mend, or Prevention of Disaster!

If the mast tube / hull bond is seriously weak and the mast comes down, the repair is expensive so maybe a way to prevent this, especially if water is disappearing down the tube, is to do the following:

1. Install a white hatch in the foredeck forwards of the mast hole. This lets you see the join.
2. After cleaning, drying and a bit of sanding, new GRP can be added around the join.
3. If you've got some cracks around the deck mast hole, some GRP could be put between the underside of the deck and top of the mast tube to reinforce this area.

Full instructions and materials can be supplied. Don't be proud, give me a ring. After 43 years I've seen and heard it all!

Andy



## **Championship Trophies—All you need to know.**

If you have seen Norah, Liz or I asking your age at a championships we do have a reason. There are three age categories for separate prizes. They are:

- Veteran: Age of 45 or above on the first day of the event.
- Ancient mariner: Age over 60 or above on the first day of the event.
- Youth: Under the age of 19



Most often this information is on the entry form or membership form but sometimes we have to check. The Veteran and Ancient Mariner award is presented to the highest placed competitor in that category outside the top 5 at the national championships or top 4 at the association championships.

There is one other prize we normally have to ask about and this is the first newcomer. This is awarded to the highest place helm that has not competed at a national championship for any dinghy class.

The other prizes awarded at both championships are the Lady champion and Committee prize.

The nationals have one other special prize. This is the team prize. To qualify you need at least three boats from your club. We add up the final positions of the three best placed boats from each club. The club with the lowest overall score wins the trophy. If you want to check if you qualify, please catch me at an open meeting or championship.

Ben Palmer (597)

## Royal Yachting Association Award

Henry and Norah Jagers, have recently been given a Lifetime Commitment Award by the Royal Yachting Association. These awards recognise the work which goes into organisations, like sailing clubs, to enable, encourage and support people to get out on the water. Henry and Norah were nominated for the award by the Comet Class Association with which they have been involved for many years, with Henry acting as Chairman for 11 years and Norah as Secretary for 26.



Henry has sailed a Comet since 1987 and has encouraged many other sailors to join him, especially while he was Commodore of Kingsmead SC and later Company Secretary at Staunton Harold SC. He continues to compete in as many events as he can, and proves by example that the Comet is a versatile and responsive single-handed dinghy which is suitable for most ages and abilities.

Norah joined the Comet “family” when her daughter acquired a Comet in 1991 and was quickly recruited to the Committee, initially to act as Trophy Buyer and later becoming Secretary. In the latter post she also organised the sailing calendar which involved negotiating with sailing clubs around the country.

Henry continues to produce leaflets and promotional material for the Class while Norah keeps busy with her camera when the boats are on the water – her days as acting as “trolley dolly” are over!. Over the years they have travelled extensively to other clubs. They moved to Beer in 2001 four days after their Comet-themed wedding.

The presentation ceremony was held at the headquarters of the Institute of Civil Engineers in Central London on November 10<sup>th</sup> and followed the Annual General Meeting of the RYA. The President, HRH The Princess Royal, presented the awards, taking time to talk to each of the recipients before posing for photographs.

Fellow Comet sailor Mark Govier also received the Lifetime Commitment Award having been nominated by his club, Merthyr Tydfil SC. Comet Duo sailors John and Jane Townsend were also present with John having been nominated by Cransley SC.

Dear Editor,

Please may we use the pages of Perihelion to say a huge “Thank You” to the Class Association for nominating us for a Lifetime Achievement Award from the RYA. It is a great honour and we feel very privileged to have been so appreciated by our peers.

Apart from the actual award, the Award Ceremony will certainly be a day to remember! We were collected from home at 0500 by a taxi and arrived in the rain – and in style – at One Great George Street, London, the home of the Institute of Civil Engineers, at 0945. No sooner had we signed in than we were hailed by John and Jane Townsend from Cransley SC, so we were immediately amongst friends.

The Annual General Meeting was held in the Lecture Theatre where we found the seats which had been reserved for us. The Award Ceremony followed the AGM over which Princess Anne had presided. She donned a pair of black gloves before taking on the task of shaking hands with all of the recipients!

Princess Anne has a reputation for being down-to-earth and hard-working and she quickly put each recipient at ease, asking relevant questions and listening to answers. She made time for each person in turn before indicating that they should pose with her for a photo. When it was our turn she noticed that I wasn't managing the steps to the stage too easily and called out “it'll be easier going down – there's a ramp!”, which really broke the ice. Henry refrained from reminding her of their previous meeting over a pink Comet at the NEC when she was less than complimentary of the colour! He did point out that he was sporting a RYA tie with the logo from 1966.

We applauded particularly loudly for Mark Govier and John Townsend who had been nominated by their clubs.

After the Awards had been presented we moved to the Great Hall for a very enjoyable lunch. The surroundings were rather grand with a beautiful painted ceiling, and the food and service was excellent. It was also an opportunity to chat to other recipients as well as RYA staff.

You may have seen the photograph of us all on the staircase. This was taken after the lunch and you will see that Mark is well to the fore! We're somewhere nearer to the top of the stairs.

Our driver picked us up at 1520 and we arrived home somewhere around 2030, tired but very happy.

As we said earlier: A Day To Remember.

Thank you,

Henry and Norah

Further information - <https://www.rya.org.uk/news/inspiring-volunteers-2023>

## 2024 RYA Dinghy and Water Sports Show

The RYA Dinghy and Water Sports Show was held at Farnborough International Exhibition Centre on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> February. This is the third year the show has been held at Farnborough after being at Alexandra Palace for a long time. I think the Show was slightly busier than last year and certainly busier in the afternoons compared to the last few years at Alexandra Palace. The Show was also slightly larger, although it is still mostly Dinghy and not much Water Sports. There appeared to be more chandlers than previously, but still not as many as at Alexandra Palace. The RYA continued to have a full programme of talks throughout both days. Unfortunately, I didn't get to as many as I wished, but the one I did get to on downwind sailing was very informative despite being for Lasers. I now have a couple of things to try out the next time I go sailing!

As we have always done, the Association had a stand at the show. Andy Simmons provided a new boat for the stand and had it all set up for us ready for Saturday morning. He also broke down the stand at the end of the show. The boat, a nice red one, is still for sale if you fancy a brand new Comet! Henry Jaggars provided us with the event calendars to hand out and some additional photos for the display board including one of Nick Baber and his Prostate Cancer sail that we had on our stand last year. Merthyr Tydfil and Silver Wing also provided some additional posters and literature, so we were almost inundated with handouts and pictures!

We had plenty of volunteers on the stand so we were all able to take a break to look around the show, although unfortunately I had to turn a couple of people down as we had more volunteers than passes. Those on the stand were:

Saturday Crew: Nick Baber, Steve Bellamy, Eddie Pope, Peter Mountford, Chris Robinson.

Sunday Crew: Ken Baker, Helen Evans, Martin Loud, Ben Palmer, John Sturgeon.

Andy was also on the stand throughout the weekend and was demonstrating the reefing of the White Xtra.

Thank you very much for all the people that helped with getting the stand ready and agreed to crew the stand over the two days. I had a very enjoyable weekend, and I hope you did too.

Chris Robinson  
63 & 867



## **BEGINNERS - HOW TO IMPROVE**

Aspiring sailors often take a RYA training course at a club or an activity centre, and are then keen to join a club and start racing there.

There is however a recurring problem faced by most clubs, and I have had many discussions about this. Many beginners find it very hard, even with club support, to become competitive helms. This can provide a loss of interest in the sport, and the members then end up leaving the club before long. If only this problem can be solved then the sport could experience a surge in popularity. Becoming competitive is undoubtedly a tough task, but it is well worth the effort. Also, it does not take that long (if sufficient time can be spared) to acquire the necessary skill level.

What follows are my thoughts on steps which could be taken to improve and gain confidence in order to succeed at club level. These steps are not in any particular order.

### **Club Boats**

It helps to have a range of club boats available for newcomers to use. These boats should be in good order and well maintained. Regular use of club boats not only helps helms to gain confidence, but can also help them to decide which class of dinghy they would like to own. Where there are club Comets, my experience at Littleton and Ogston is that this helps build a fleet. This is because newcomers to sailing like the comfort of the Comet's cockpit, the light weight for launching and recovery, the durability, and the relatively low cost to buy a competitive boat.

### **Own Boat**

Buying a boat is an exciting step. Taking an experienced helm along to view intended purchases is a wise move. In my view there is no point in spending a lot of money on a first boat. There are many dinghies for sale at reasonable prices in certain classes (especially Comets) which could be competitive at club level. In learning the sport it is inevitable that a boat will get a few bumps and scrapes along the way. Only once you are sure about your ability should you consider buying a brand new or nearly new boat.

### **Buddy**

Pairing up with an experienced helm at the club is a great way to make progress. People are always happy to help and pass on tips. You will quickly learn about the best sail settings in all conditions, boat trim and other essentials.

### **Fitness**

I wrote about the importance of physical and mental fitness in an earlier article. Having a fitness regime alongside a sailing improvement regime should pay dividends.

## **Boat Maintenance & Improvement**

Having confidence in the boat is critical. If the boat is as competitive as you can make it, then you can better concentrate on your own performance, rather than worrying about the boat itself. A bit of time spent checking things over is important. The main areas are:

- Effective controls - change defective ropes, use non-stretch ropes, compare fittings with the top helms' boats, all should work smoothly
- Stop any leaks into the hull
- If the sail is significantly worn then buy a new sail (if affordable), or maybe find a good second hand sail. A decent sail is vital, particularly on the beats. Keep the old sail for practice.

## **Practice, Time Afloat & Setting Targets**

There is no substitute for spending time in your boat, whether in races or just practising. Then all the manoeuvres start to become second nature, meaning you can concentrate more when racing on tactics and observing what the other boats are doing. As a rule of thumb, you should notice a significant improvement towards the end of your first racing season, but progress from that level will generally be at a slower pace in subsequent years. You may never reach full potential, so there is always something to aim for. Although I have been racing for many years with good success, there are still things I plan to try and improve! It could be useful to set targets to improve certain aspects of sailing, then once one target is mastered move on to the next.

## **Further Courses**

Clubs often hold further courses focused on racing, boat tuning etc. Attending these is a good idea.

## **Beginner Racing Series**

Some clubs hold races just for beginners, which means competing against others of similar ability. It is sensible to start with these before proceeding to the "cut and thrust" of normal club racing.

## **Personal Handicap Racing Series**

Beginners in normal club racing face a big experience disadvantage, and being left behind is not good for confidence. Some clubs have a racing series based on personal handicaps, where beginners are given a time benefit which could mean they can actually win races. As results improve the personal handicap changes accordingly.

## **Open Meetings**

Finally, the way to improve the most might be to enter a few local open meetings, where you can race against lots of other helms in the same class. There is usually a wide range of ability in open meetings, but there is close competition throughout the fleet which is a great learning experience.

**EDDIE POPE**

## Comet 57 – 38 Years Old renovation

It must be highly irritating for hard working folk to listen to retired people banging on about how 'They've never been so busy' and 'cannot understand how they ever managed to fit work in'.

The reason for this was famously explained by a certain Mr Parkinson, who put forward that 'The time to do something expands to fit the time available'. However, I would add that there is another tendency which afflicts someone newly retired; namely: 'Deluded DIY Syndrome'.

Now there are many of a much more practical bent than me, but I usually find that when attempting a new job, I do eventually manage to perfect the technique.... But only after making every mistake in the book.

Comet 57 turned 38 last October and for the last year the deck had begun to part company with the mast tube. So, true to form, when I saw Andy's notes on repairing a mast hole, I couldn't resist having a go. As Comet Dinghies don't offer a 38-year warranty (!), and having loads of time on my hands (ha-ha!) ....



So, I had a go, even rigging up a tripod to separate the deck from the tube, in order to get some fibre glass into the gap. Needless to say, it only worked as a temporary repair and I was on the phone to Andy over Christmas, asking if he could do the job properly for me.

It was a considerable relief handing the boat over to be professionally repaired, which included cutting a new access hatch, reinforcing around the mast foot and drilling the drain hole.

"And while you're about it, can you renovate my deck fittings and repair the leaking daggerboard casing etc please?". Well, the pictures speak for themselves and I could not believe what a fantastic job Andy did. He even insisted on removing some rather ugly rowlock holes that I had inherited. Definitely not in keeping with the class standard



It wasn't a cheap job, but should give C57 a new lease of life for a good few years. It was certainly less costly than buying another boat and anyway, the idea of scrapping her appalled me. Although Andy (sounding like my dentist) said "It was a good thing you didn't leave it any longer"

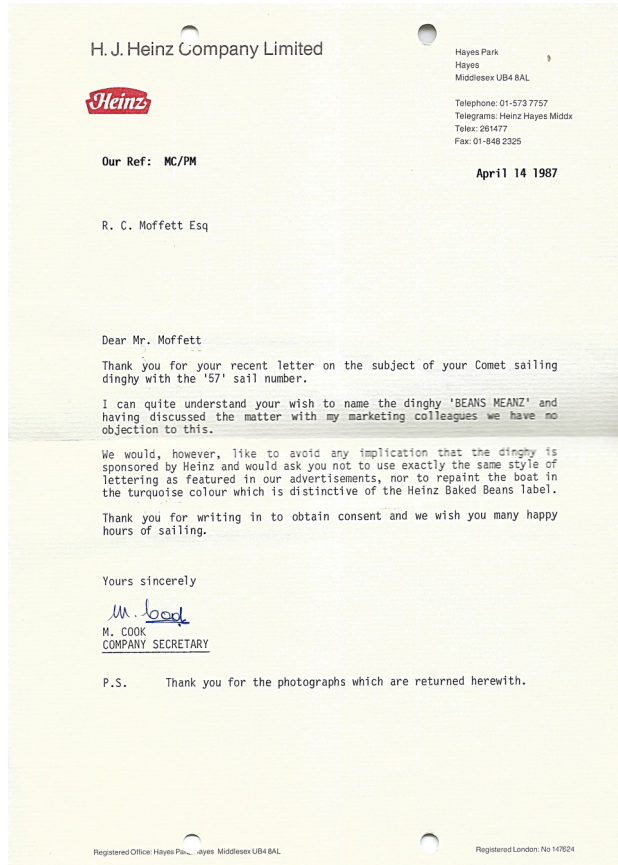
The name is interesting 'Beanz Meanz'.

Beside is a letter from Heinz, giving the original owner permission to use the name, provided the boat was NOT built with the turquoise Heinz Beans can livery. Those of us of a certain age will recall the 'Heinz 57 Varieties' strapline.

C57 is only used at Frensham now, having been replaced by the young upstart C231 for travelling, but should serve me well for a good few years to come.

Thanks Andy!

Steve Gregory







Comet Association



JOIN US AT THE

**COMET  
ASSOCIATION  
CHAMPIONSHIPS  
11 & 12  
MAY  
2024**



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# Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club

## Comet

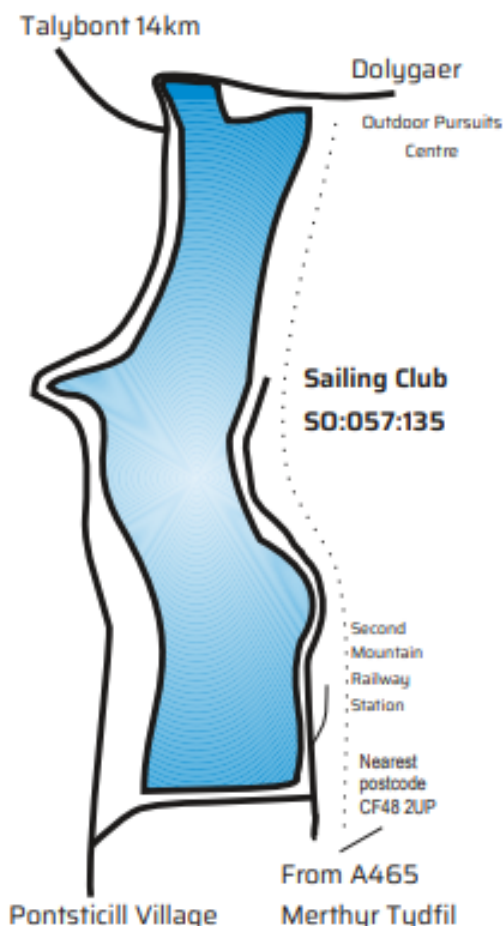
National Championships, 24<sup>th</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> August 2024

Briefing, Saturday 11:00

Comet Class' National Championships. Nine races, seven to count. See the website for full details. <https://mtsc.org.uk/comet.htm>

Come and sail in the beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park. About ½ hour from M4, J32 and a little further from Monmouth (A449/A40). The Comet Class AGM will be held after racing on Saturday, followed by an optional dinner (off-site). An optional barbecue will be held after racing on Sunday.

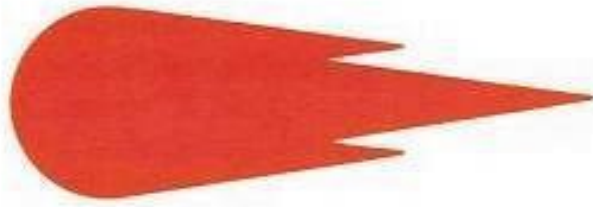
Plenty of local B&B is available within a mile or two and an excellent camping & caravan site is a few miles away and there are large camping fields with facilities available at **Parkwood Dolygaer** along with other accommodation.



All refreshments and buffet lunches for the helm are included in the fee of £TBC per Comet. Refreshments and lunch is available for friends and family at just £TBCpp. Booking in advance helps us cater. See the website for more details and a link to our WebCollect booking page.

<https://mtsc.org.uk/comet.htm>





# Comet Class Association

Affiliated to the Royal Yachting Association

## **Perihelion 144**

Please send your contributions for the next issue of Perihelion by

1st July 2024 to [newseditor@cometsailing.org.uk](mailto:newseditor@cometsailing.org.uk)

