

The Jester Helm

THE JESTER CHALLENGE

Seamanship without Showmanship

He knows not where he's going
For the ocean will decide.
It's not the destinations,
It's the glory of the ride.

Dear Jester 'family',

The other day I announced that I was retiring from the one-man, non-committee that was not-coordinating the Jester Challenge and asked for volunteers to take over the tiller.

Happily for future Jester Challenges I was thrilled that the first to put up his hand was the indomitable Roger Taylor of *Mingming* fame. (Privately I wanted to ask him first but guessed that that would not have been democratic.) Many will remember him as a founding father of the *Jester* concept who has always had the unique ethos totally at heart – indeed he could have invented the whole thing on his own. Roger is a most distinguished, high-latitude, single-handed skipper and, to prove the point, he is a *Jester Medallist*, courtesy of the *Ocean Cruising Club*, and in 2014 was presented with their *Seamanship Medal* by the *Royal Cruising Club*; of which Blondie Hasler had been a life-long member.

The moment I accepted his offer he began to put together a non-committee of two other volunteers while happy to take advice from across the board. This is not a committee in any true sense of the word but merely a threesome to spread the load, particularly in this uncertain year. Indeed Roger has decided to call this guiding collection The Helm.

The two others are George Arnison who not only owns a very beautiful, wooden sloop, *Good Report*, but who, usefully, lives only five miles away from me. Once I have introduced him, he will be responsible for all the local contacts. The third member of The Helm is Howard Chivers who many will also know as a Jester skipper in his Sadler 29 called *Sandpiper*.

To assuage any fears that the Jester standards will not be upheld (perish the thought!) I want to stress how delighted I am that three fine seamen have agreed to form The Helm: I have total and utter confidence that the future of the Jester Challenge is in the finest of hands and that the future is assured.

At the very beginning (in 2005, a year before the first JC to Newport) when I was being criticised by some in the yachting press (and including the MCA and Coast Guard) my stock answer was *Bugger the begrudgers!* ...I thought they must have realised they were in danger of 'meeting their match' and so they shut up.

I'll leave you with my favourite anecdote from that first JC in 2006. When I contacted the Canadian Coast Guard to advise them that a number of single-handed, under thirty foot yachts would be passing through their area their short response was *Fine by us and good luck to them – providing each one is carrying a heliograph!* My reply was, *Of course – they all carry CDs.* Seriously! – and from then on I knew that we had support from at least one official organisation!

Moons'ls!

Ewen