

## *Profile: Jimmy Blacksmith. Or Age Shall Not Weary Them!*

Old is beautiful they say, but obviously, 'they' had not met the crew of Jimmy Blacksmith!

Take that however you like, but there's something about the crew of the big red Adams 12 that haunts the trophy presentations at the end of each season.

Experience, skill or sheer 'A'! Call it what you like, but there's an aura about this group of members who've sailed against, and with, each other in 'Mottles', 'Dragons' and now on board 'Jimmy' for over 40 or 50 years. Bitter enemies in the past on the race course, but longstanding friends in the bar.

The word 'Legend' comes to mind but a 'leg end' is a foot and with Jimmy Blacksmith's crew you'll never know what's afoot! With an average age of 67 plus, this is a crew with a massive amount of experience. Every member of this crew has, at some time, skippered boats and when you get 10 skippers on one boat, you'd think you would have problems. But not on board 'Jimmy'!

For a start, owner/skipper, John Sykes, (not even the oldest at 81!) is a life member of the club and has the perspicacity to know when it's going to be sloppy 'out there'. So, he lets the ancient mariner, life member Bob Lucas (82) take turns with one of the younger boys, Bob Umhauer (68) on the helm, and, at no stage is there shortage of advice from the other skippers on board!

Bob Lucas, OAM is also the boat's navigator and tries to keep the boat – and the crew – on a correct course. They certainly do well around the marks and so they should with kids like Gary Raynor (53), Graham Thomson (56), Roger Grant (58), Bruce Hogan (59) dashing around the deck. To assist them with a bit of the old grey matter they can lean on the 'middle aged' Laurens Mol (60), Don Townson (77) and, knocking on 80 at 79, Des Allen.

What an array of talent that is!! It's no wonder that they are on the podium so often! You only have to check the honour boards for confirmation of this!

A Sydney/Hobart boat, Jimmy Blacksmith and crew have won more aggregates than any other boat or crew in the club and always thoroughly enjoy their sailing. This is a dry boat during racing (although Skipper John prefers it with brandy!) and refreshment is enjoyed in moderation.

Despite being outclassed by faster and newer boats, the veteran crew on board the heavier Jimmy Blacksmith can, and does beat some of the lighter racers and their younger crews. If any boat does beat them, it is only by a few seconds.

Whilst enjoying every moment of their racing, these 'lads' get a fair bit of humour watching others 'mess-up'. They recall the time when an elderly skipper ran his yacht into a moored ship! But such is their sense of humour that their faces are wrinkled with smiling, not old age!

Looking at the plethora of 'Grey-power' on board Jimmy Blacksmith, it's obvious that they are not as agile or as strong as in their now spent youth! But they certainly make up for it with skill, knowledge, and vast experience.

May the winds be with you and your crew, Jimmy Blacksmith.

Bob Appleton.



John Sykes



Opening Day on 'Jimmy'



The faithful crew of Jimmy Blacksmith