

Norman Clement Anthony Butcher

1927-2014

Educated: Lefevre Technical School

Trade: Fitter & Turner/Draftsman

Largs Bay Sailing Club History

In 1939 Norm started sailing at the Port River Sailing Club at the age of 12 with Rex Dix and Ken Cox.

Whilst serving an apprenticeship with Gibb and Miller, he was invited to Largs to inspect the 14' dinghies. Nobody was sailing there at the time as the beach was covered with barbed wire entanglements still in place from the war. In 1944 Norm joined the Largs club after attending many dinghy club dances and observing a good fleet of dinghies regularly sailing.

In 1946, at 18, he built his first dinghy, Marauder and another called Outlaw the following year.

In 1949 the club's only life boat, Les Moody, was in disrepair so Norm and J. Bennet motored around to Torrens Island and cut enough mangrove knees to replace all those in the Moody. He completed a full overhaul and refit in the off season.

In 1950-51 Norm crewed in heavyweight sharpies with Arnie Deed and won many regattas.

In 1952 there was a membership resurgence in the club and with most boats housed there it was decided to extend two bays south. Norm was involved with this project from the outset from planning to a very 'hands on' construction phase, starting with a 3' x 2' x 90' eastern foundation. During his 'quiet time' he managed to build SA's first veneer 14ft skiff in the LBSC boatshed.

With safety concerns for its members a committee, including Norm, was formed to raise money for a new lifeboat. A clinker hull was purchased and Norm and Arthur Mitchell completed the decking, fitting, power and trailer construction of the HN Richards which was launched on Opening Day 1953.

1953 also saw Norm on the planning committees and construction crew for a new club front and dance floor.

1954-56 14ft skiffs were the go and with the likes of J. Baker, R. Temple, P. Moore, K. Curry, A. Fisher and Norm they were promoted and with much organisation the national titles were held at Largs in 1954-55 season.

1956 saw the evolution of the plywood boats and Norm was involved in building 12 Holdfast Trainers for the club and encouraging parents to purchase them.

By 1957 Norm was representing LBSC at YRA meetings, 14ft skiff Council and Holdfast Trainer Association meetings.

In 1959 with finances tightening, Norm decided to design and build the first "skimmer" Moth at the club at a cost of 20 pounds. Some 14 boats were built off of his jig for members and this class seemed to breed new members for two decades.

In 1960 Norm directed his attention to the new Olympic FD class. He was involved with the promotion and construction of the class from day one and in 1962-63 the FD National and Olympic trials were held at Largs Bay. Some 70 boats entered with the top 25 in the Nationals competing in the Olympic Trials. Norm and John Baker sailing Skidoo, a yacht he built, qualified for the trials and finished a credible 10th. Norm was also the class measurer.

In 1964 LBSC decided to buy a syndicate boat to represent the club in the forthcoming 505 World Championships to be held at B&SYC in 1966. Larbasin was built and Norm was nominated skipper with Bill Petre as crew. They spent the next two seasons in preparation and finished 30th out of 70.

In 1966 Norm returned to FD's and through frustration with the spinnaker systems invented the first spinnaker chute. Whilst on a business trip in Melbourne 1968 Norm learned that the FD World Championships were to be held in Australia. Upon his return he reported to the SAFDA who formed a representative committee in conjunction with a steering committee from LBSC. Largs was chosen to host the event in 1970. Norm served on the organising committees for two years and was the National Measurer for the event.

In 1970 Norm took an interest in coaching and began running Friday night talks and being available early on Saturday mornings for those who wanted help. He became the club Holdie representative and by 1973-74 had built a number of new boats including the first bulkhead holdfast to improve safety standards. Norm was measurer for over 11 years, president for 2 years and was awarded life membership of the association.

1972-74 the AYF decided to set up a national training scheme and appointed Norm as state coach. He was involved in setting up a national scheme called Youth Sail and together with the SAYRA formed a youth training committee for SA. He introduced the new system not just to LBSC but to all SA clubs and held many coaching seminars and clinics throughout the state. This National system is still in progress today.

In 1973 Norm became the state cadet dinghy coach and in 1976-77 SA won its first Stonehaven Cup in 11 years. Norm's coaching extended well into the late eighties with various clubs, classes and individuals requesting specialist coaching seminars and tuning clinics. They ranged from juniors to sailing masters on top keel boats.

When not at Largs he always promoted the club to members and families of the keel boat world for he believed that if you want to understand yachting you must start at the grass roots.

For much of his life Norm Butcher has been an extremely active member, promoter, coach and ambassador to the Largs Bay Sailing Club.

During his time Norm has introduced many new families to the LBSC and assisted and encouraged their kids to sail. Many families are still members.

As a family man he never said no to demands from his three children to build dinghies, coach, drive to and from hundreds of regattas and support other sports.

Norm's hands on approach to 'just getting the job done' around the club, his creative boat building skills and his extensive coaching commitments during his 46 years as a member have positively and dramatically enhanced and influenced the evolution of the club.

Dedicated family members such as Norm are extremely rare and a well-deserved Life Membership of LBSC was awarded to Norm in his later years.

Norm is survived by his wife Jan of 56 years and children Anthony, Trevor and Karen.
Forever our coach and desperately missed. Sail on Norm.