

Beecham top name in skiff sailing

Ask anyone in Northern sailing where to find Mr. Alf Beecham and be prepared for an inquiring stare. But ask for "A.J." and receive an immediate answer.

If there were a clock on the front of the Belmont 16ft. Skiff Sailing Club, Alf Beecham would be equally well-known. He began sailing in 16ft. skiffs more than 30 years ago and has never wavered in his allegiance to the class or Belmont club.

He has risen in the sport from a little-regarded bailer-boy to the top position in skiff sailing in Australia.

He will leave on December 28 to go to Perth as manager of the N.S.W. 16ft. Skiff Sailing Association team to compete in the national championship series on the Swan—the seventh time he has been appointed to the responsible task in 14 years.

He was not available, because of his work, for appointment in most of the other years, added to the fact that the N.S.W. Association does not appoint a team manager when the title series is held, once in every three years, in its own State.

Alf Beecham began sailing in skiffs with Bill Johnson in Victress in races on Belmont Bay. He sailed in a number of well-known skiffs after that, filling most positions from bailer-boy to skipper in a number of them.

First post

He took a keen interest in the administrative side of the sport and became secretary of Belmont 16ft. Skiff Club in 1948. He held the position till he relinquished it six years later. Since then he has filled many positions, including three terms, each of two years, as Commodore.

He is a life member of the club, one of its patrons and one of its trustees.

"A. J." was the first secretary of the Northern 16ft. Skiff Zone when it was formed in 1952, continued in the

position for six years and is now its president.

He became the North's representative to the N.S.W. 16ft. Skiff Sailing Association in 1953. He is now a member of the State Association Council



ALF BEECHAM

— one of the three top positions in the sport. He was made a life member of the State Association in 1967. He is an Australian and State umpire, positions he has held since 1953 and is one of the most knowledgeable men in the game in Australia.

Knows skiffs

Alf Beecham knows skiffs, as the saying goes, from back to front. He can talk with some authority about the great craft and top skippers of the past since he has, either as a competitor or in an official capacity, seen most of them.

He first became a State team manager in 1955 when he took the team to Perth. He did such a fine job, as a disciplinarian and ambassador, that his selection for the position a year later when the team went to Queensland, was a mere formality. And there was little doubt that when, in 1958, the N.S.W. team went to Perth again who would be its manager. That gave "A.J." the unprecedented sequence of three manager-

ships when the team went outside N.S.W. He took the team to Brisbane again in 1962 and back to Perth in 1967, following this with another appointment for the championships in Brisbane in 1968. Now he goes to Perth again to record his second triple run as team manager.

A master of detail and organisation "A.J." has the confidence of team members in a highly competitive sport, while his knowledge of the ins and outs, the rules and the tricks of the game make him an ideal selection for a difficult position few others seek.

BEECHAM, Alfred John.—

The Relatives and Friends of GARY and CAROLYN BEECHAM, GAYNA and DON BLATCHFORD, GREG and LIZ BEECHAM, KAREN BEECHAM, DEAN and NICHOLE BLATCHFORD and BROOKE, TODD BLATCHFORD, ALAN BEECHAM and FAMILY, the FAMILY of the late MAY STEVENSON are invited to attend the Funeral of their beloved father, father-in-law, grandfather, great-grandfather, brother, brother-in-law and uncle ALFRED JOHN (A.J.) BEECHAM (husband of the late Daphne Beecham) of 8 Thomas Street, Belmont, to move from St. Luke's Uniting Church, Narla Road, Belmont North, this Wednesday afternoon after Service commencing at 2 o'clock for the Newcastle Crematorium.

No flowers by request.

James Murray

PHONE: 61 1435

BELMONT 16' SAILING CLUB

BEECHAM.— Members of the above are requested to attend the Funeral of our late Life Member ALFRED JOHN (A.J.) BEECHAM. For further particulars please see Family Notice.
K. Buxton (Pres)
S. Hales (Sec Man)



BEECHAM, Alfred John.—

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BELMONT BOWLING CLUB

BEECHAM.— Members of the above are invited to attend the Funeral of our late member ALFRED JOHN BEECHAM. For particulars see Family Notice.
Blazers to be worn.
B. Talbot (Pres.)
J. King (Hon Sec)

BELMONT 16' SAILING CLUB

BEECHAM.— Members of the above are requested to attend the Funeral of our late Life Member ALFRED JOHN (A.J.) BEECHAM. For further particulars please see Family Notice.
K. Buxton (Pres)
S. Hales (Sec Man)

ADAMSTOWN R.S.L. CLUB CO-OP LTD.

BEECHAM.— Officers and members of the above are respectfully requested to attend the Funeral of their late esteemed member, ALFRED BEECHAM. For further particulars please see Family Notice.
L.R. Onslow (Pres.)
V.E. Burrows (Sec.Man)

BELMONT SPORTSMANS CLUB CO-OP LTD

BEECHAM.— Members of the above are invited to attend the Funeral of their late member ALF BEECHAM (A.J.). For further particulars please see Family Notice.
J.C. Hook (Pres.)
R.J. Morton (Sec.Man)

SWANSEA RSL SUB BRANCH CLUB LTD

BEECHAM.— Members of the above Club are respectfully invited to attend the Funeral of their late member, ALFRED JOHN (A.J.) BEECHAM. For further particulars, please see Family Notice.
J. Taylor (Pres.)
A. Patroni (Sec.)

14 THURSDAY,

LEGAL NOTICES

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF NEW SOUTH WALES — PROBATE DIVISION

After 14 days from publication of this notice an application for Administration of the Estate of ALFRED JOHN BEECHAM, late of 8 Thomas Street, Belmont, in the said State, Winding Engine Driver, deceased, will be made by GARY ALFRED BEECHAM, the son of the deceased. Creditors are required to send particulars of their claims upon his Estate to: ERIC BUTLER, Solicitors, 178 Pacific Highway, SWANSEA 2281. DX 12613, Charlestown.

M.M.H.
4/7/94

A.J. is North's 'Mr Sailing'

In the early 1900s Alf Beecham rode his bicycle from Swansea to Toronto each summer Saturday afternoon to sail his 16ft skiff, Kiara, in the Toronto Club's races.

That was surely the ultimate in dedication to, and enthusiasm for, a sport if ever there was.

The dedication and the enthusiasm has carried into the fourth generation.

Mr Beecham's son, grandson and great-grandsons have continued to travel along the waterways on which that remarkable enthusiast of so many years ago sailed with such marked success.

His son Alf has long been one of the best-known — perhaps the best-known of all — personalities in Australian 16ft skiff sailing. And little wonder. He has built up a record, both as competitor and administrator, without parallel in the sport.

Known far and wide simply as A.J., Mr Beecham has been part and parcel of the marked changes in 16ft skiffs over the years, a member of committees which have pondered over and debated, sanctioned or rejected proposed changes.

He has seen skiffs change — and has helped make the change — in design and construction from timber to ply to glass. He has argued about the merits of the many types of sail cloth permitted, helped gain approval for the introduction of buoyancy tanks and the trapeze. His watchword in 16ft skiff sailing has always been "progress." He has never agreed to any move which would mar it.

A.J. has seen the great skiffs and skippers come and go in the last 40 seasons. He rates Billo Hayward as the best skipper of all in all conditions in that long period with Jack Cassidy, Doug Reid, Gary Bruniges, Ken Beashe and Ken Minter

not far behind. Beashe's Elvine Bay he regards as the best skiff he has seen.

Alas, he did not have the fortune to see Les Steele, 'Tot' Walters, George Fennell, Fred Newton at their best but he has a tender spot for Jim Parker and Jim Lunn who did so much to make 16ft skiff sailing so popular on Belmont Bay.

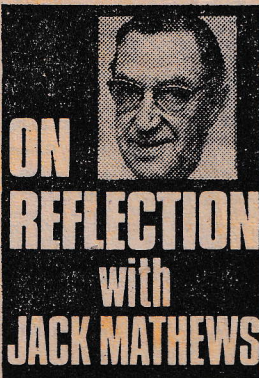
A.J. became a skiff fanatic in 1938 when, having taken up residence at Belmont. He became a member of Billy Johnson's crew in Victress, the fine skiff built by George and Foster Fennell in their shed below Toronto Railway Station. He went on to sail in Namoi (Stan Newton), and as for'ard hand in Leros (Max Hetherington), Black Swan (Ron Caldwell) and Ajax (Neville Miner). He sailed his last race as the season of 1965-66 ended with Ross Sinclair in Davis S. He was then 50.

Long before that, A.J. became interested in Belmont Club's administration. He became secretary in 1949, holding the position until 1955. He was the club's delegate to the State Association in 1949 and held the post until 1961. He has been a member of the association's council for eight years and an Australian, State and club umpire for 15 years. No one has managed more NSW teams to Australian championships. He held the reins eight times between 1955 and 1973.

He was the first secretary of the Northern 16ft Skiff Zone, later becoming its vice-president, vice-commodore and commodore.



A. J. Beecham



ON REFLECTION with JACK MATHEWS

It is not stretching imagination to suggest that Al Beecham and Belmont Sailing Club grew up together. When the club gained a licence in 1954 A.J. became the licensee. He was the club's patron and a trustee from 1968 to 1974 when changed constitution eliminated such positions. He was the club's commodore for three separate terms and also commodore of the club's Pelican division in 1962. In his spare (!) time he compiled a comprehensive history of the club.

It is a remarkable record but far from ended. A.J.'s son Gary, well-known in travel agency circles, began his sailing in VJ's and then moved into skiffs. He has been a member of Belmont crews at the Maryborough (Qld) Easter regatta each year since 1959 — and will be there again this weekend.

A.J.'s pride and joy are his grandsons, Dean and Todd Blatchford. They sail a Pelican Class craft he had built for them and which is named A.J.B. There is a new Pelican coming up for Todd next season.

It is odds-on the two youngsters will graduate to skiffs as did their great-granddad about 70 years ago, their grandfather almost 40 years ago and their uncle when he was a lad.

There are many families with a proud record in Australian 16ft skiff sailing. None can better that of the Beechams of Belmont — and none has given more to the sport than has the greatly respected A.J.

SAILING MAN FETED

Mr. Alf Beecham, of Belmont, one of the best known administrators in 16ft. skiff sailing in Australia, was elected as a life member of the club at Belmont 16ft. Skiff Sailing Club's annual meeting.

Mr. Beecham, who has been manager of a number of N.S.W. Association teams that have competed in the national series in Perth and Brisbane, is a State Association umpire. He has been prominent in the sport for 24 years, during which time he has been a member of Belmont Club. He has also accepted the position of Commodore for the coming season.

Officers elected were—President, Mr. J. Hutchison; Deputy president, Mr. Terry Beames; Secretary, Mr. V. Charles; Treasurer, Mr. Stan de Argeval; Commodore, Mr. A. J. Beecham; Vice-commodore, Mr. R. Hawkins; Captain, Mr. R. Caldwell; Sailing committee, Messrs. O. Hansen, R. Parker, W. Pryor, R. Thomson, E. Walters; Management committee, Messrs. C. Byrnes, R. Green, E. Siver, E. Wheeler, L. Wise.



ALF BEECHAM

AJ's ethic of loyalty a certain course for success

I WAS preparing my Sunday sermon on loyalty — that old-fashioned ethic where you stood by your family, friends and football team — when I received the news of the death of Alf Beecham, known in sailing circles worldwide as AJ.

AJ Beecham epitomised loyalty.

He was such a creature of this earth that he laughed off the premature announcement of his death made recently in the bereavement notice for his wife, Daphne, before putting his affairs in order to join his life-long partner. He died on Saturday aged 78.

The Beecham family was sailing in Belmont.

AJ's father, Alf, started the long association with the sport on Lake Macquarie in the early 1900s and now stretching to four generations including world and national champions Dean and Todd Blatchford and Gary Beecham.

When I sailed my first 16ft skiff, *Expenses*, with Ron Bell, Gary Miller and Gary Seivl back in 1968, AJ Beecham had already retired from competitive sailing but was regarded as the father of the Belmont 16ft Skiff Club.

He started his sailing career in 1938 on a skiff named *Victress* and sailed his last season in 1965-66 aboard the late Ross Sinclair's *David S*.

But he was far from finished with sailing, and spent almost the entire remaining 28 years involved in some way in the sport.

He had been the club's secretary from 1949 to 1955 and a State delegate from 1949 to 1961. He then held



ROACH ON MONDAY

club, State and Australian positions; was NSW team manager a dozen times; helped start the Northern Zone Skiff Association and still found time to 'pick up a few tailor' on his frequent boat trips across Belmont Bay.

When the Belmont 16ft Skiff Club was only the size of an outback toilet, AJ helped secure a liquor licence and for a time in 1954 was the original licensee. He was commodore on three occasions, patron from 1968 to 1974 when the position was discontinued, and saw the club grow to one of the biggest and richest sailing clubs in the country.

His name might not be on the two outside decks facing the blue waters of Belmont, but Doug Reid and Gary Bruniges, who were honoured that way by Belmont club, would certainly agree that they owe some of their national success to the efforts of AJ Beecham.

AJ Beecham was 50 when he retired from competitive sailing, and the past 28 years have been spent compiling the history of the sport, almost

back to the time of Noah and his ark.

The success of his grandchildren also gave him great pleasure, as it did seeing his son, Gary, move through all the sailing ranks.

Dean Blatchford won a world 505 title as well as State and Australian events; Todd Blatchford was an Australian VJ champion and Greg Beecham was Australian windsurfing champion. His granddaughter, Karen Beecham, is also in the sailing ranks and also started in the Pelican class that AJ helped establish.

AJ was a forward thinker, involved in bringing some of the world's best open boat skippers to Belmont to try to introduce the 16ft skiff worldwide.

Nobody knew more, or loved sailing more, than AJ Beecham and the course he set has ensured the success of the sport for many generations to come.

He was fair and tough in his role as racing umpire, and there will be many stories told of his fearless decisions after the funeral at St Luke's Uniting Church, Belmont on Wednesday at 2pm.

Many of the top skippers will remember his call 'take her home, boys' when they were disqualified, especially some members of his family.

On one occasion, AJ disqualified a skiff skippered by his nephew, Barry Irving, and crewed by his son, Gary, son-in-law Don Blatchford, and a young medic, Robert Hughes, who became his family doctor.

What initially prompted my loyalty angle was a couple of recent league signings.

Knights captain Mark Sargent resigned for the club and will probably

play out the remainder of his career at Marathon Stadium.

Not that he is anywhere near retirement. He is still capable of representing Australia at the end-of-year Kangaroo tour.

The Knights weren't in the Winfield Cup when Sargent was first grade material and he moved from Central Charlestown to Canterbury-Bankstown.

The big prop showed his loyalty to Newcastle when he risked his future by resigning from the NSW Police Force, after being refused a transfer, so he could join the Knights.

It should only be a formality for 'lifer' Robbie McCormack to remain with the Knights. He is expected to re-sign this week to continue his association with the Knights from day one, the same as Paul Harragon, Steve Crowe, Tony Butterfield and Marc Glanville.

The announcement of Matthew Rodwell's desertion to new club the Western Reds reminded me that club loyalty went out the window for money around the same time as junior league stopped at District Park and local boundaries were eliminated.

Rodwell made more denials of going to Perth than he did physiotherapy visits after surgery to his knee, shattered in the final pre-season trial match against Cronulla.

But the 25% better offer swayed him away from his Novocastrian background and not even the obvious setbacks of travel to and from Perth almost every second weekend and a probable hiding each week, as well as severing close family ties, could keep him in Newcastle.

Loyalty to the Hunter Valley is certainly not beneficial to everyone.

Brothers Con and John Mitsios have put a lifetime into Newcastle Austral Soccer Club, not to mention hundreds of thousands of hours and dollars, and their dreams will be shattered this week when the club folds.

Now known as Newcastle Breakers, Austral was formed by a group of migrants joined together at the Greta camp who had one interest in common — soccer.

Hard work — all voluntary — saw the club become one of the major forces in Northern NSW soccer and achieve a healthy bank account. That was until entry into the National Soccer League where the criteria for acceptance forced the club to overspend on developing Austral Park, now Mitre 10 field, and go into the red for almost \$2.5million.

The Australian Soccer Federation showed its lack of loyalty last Friday by refusing to carry the debt, and it seems only a matter of course this week that the doors will be closed on another chapter of Newcastle's soccer history. All soccer will be affected, not just the old Austral club.

Whether a 'Phoenix' will rise from the ashes of the liquidated club, with secretary-manager Pat Clarke piloting a rescue mission, remains to be seen.

Moves are afoot to ensure Newcastle has a stand-by team to fill in for the Breakers if possible.

But the Breakers should be asking questions of the ASF as to which clubs it still supports which do not have facilities set down in the criteria, and then also eliminate them from the NSL.