

# Basic Detail Report

---



## Solace II

### Vessel number

HV000279

### Date

1938

### Primary Maker

Mews Boatbuilders

### Description

SOLACE II was built for Fisher Beard. It was carvel planked and originally launched with a gaff ketch rig. The rig was changed to a Bermudan around the 1940s, then to a cutter rig in the 1960s, with mast moved aft from its original position. It has a launch-like hull shape with a deep forefoot under the stem and long straight keel, typical of many small craft of the era. It was launched with a centreboard but this has since been replaced with a deep sectioned deadwood keel. The cabin house is original but the shelter is a more recent addition. Family of a previous owner with connections to Fisher Beard believe it was built by Vic Mews at Fremantle. Mews have one of the longest histories of boatbuilding in Western Australia. They have built many commercial and pleasure craft for well over a century, possibly beginning vessel construction before the 1850s. During World War II SOLACE II is believed to have served with the Army, assisting the US squadron of Catalina flying boats that was based on the Swan River during World War II. At this time it was called MELTON LASS. The West Australian, 28/07/1941 has an image of crew aboard MELTON LASS, with the caption: "Messrs. Rod Tyler, Langley Cumming (skipper) and Gordon Winslade. the crew of the yacht Melton Lass, which received a severe buffeting off the coast on Friday and Saturday." Their full story was reported elsewhere in the paper: 'WITH STORM NINETEEN HOURS IN YACHT. Terrifying Experiences. Caught by the suddenly rising storm on Friday night in their 30 foot yawl, the Marconi-rigged sea going yacht Melton Lass, and then battered by wind and wave until late on the following afternoon, three yachtsmen told, last night, of 19 hours of terrifying experiences. They were Mr. Langley Cumming, of Bicton; Mr. Rod Tyler, of South Perth; and Mr. Gordon Winslade, of Perth. On July 2 they left on a holiday run to Geraldton, which they made in 44 hours in ideal weather. After a couple of days at Geraldton they went to Shark Bay, and then travelled about the coast until last Thursday, when, at noon they left the Geraldton lighthouse behind on the return south. As a precaution, they took the mainsail and jib in soon after dark on Friday night. There was then, however, no indication of coming trouble. About 10.30 p.m. they estimated that they were about 30 miles north of Rottnest, as the lighthouse light could be seen. They shortened sail to slow the boat, intending to make harbour soon after dawn on Saturday morning. The storm broke suddenly and then began a terrifying night. They had counted on a light westerly or an early morning easterly to take them quietly to Fremantle. Instead, within half an hour they had to set to sea for sea-room. They estimated that they had been driven within 10 miles of the shore. They set a north-west course under a small staysail and mizzen, but at about 1.30 a.m. decided to again change course

towards shore. The storm was increasing in severity, the waves tossed them about, spray enveloped them and they were bitterly cold. They had to change watches frequently, to preserve their strength, owing to the battering on the tiller. Soon after 3 a.m. all came on deck for the effort to handle the craft. Many times the gusts made their situation so dangerous that they felt they would be beaten. "We were shipping water and the pump was inadequate for the task, so we set about bucketing the water out; it was quicker," one said last night. They shifted the boards over the bilge and one stood in the bilge, filled the bucket and lifted it to a companion higher up, to be emptied. Before dawn they were almost frozen stiff with the wind and spray. They shifted heavy material in the stern to the cabin and for'ard, so as to keep the stern up, and they pumped overboard. 70 gallons of drinking water, to help lighten the boat, saving only eight gallons. "For hours we were lost," one said. "The visibility was so bad that you could only see a few yards. Just before dawn we saw a ship about a mile away and tried to signal it with a flash lamp, but we got no reply." The storm had shown no sign of abating. At 10.30 in the morning the steel band on the mizzen smashed and the sail was soon in ribbons. Soon afterwards the staysail went similarly into the sea. We had warmed up our auxiliary-motor in readiness. The two bare poles faced us and the waves, which were about 40ft. high, threatened to envelop us. We turned tail and ran with it. Our boat at times simply 'skated' down the sides of the following waves. We thought we were about 25 miles west. of Rottneest, but it was not till 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon that we found, by seeing the lighthouse, that we were somewhere south of the island and off Carnac Island. The engine was at times unable to keep her nose up to the sea, but eventually we made a bay at Rottneest, at 5 pm. on Saturday. We had lived on one packet of biscuits and a bottle of whisky during this period." The men spoke gratefully of kindness shown them at Rottneest, which they left yesterday afternoon. They made anchorage in the Swan River soon after dark, "still wondering," as one put it, "how we had been able to ride such a terrible storm. After the war it took on its original role as a recreational craft and is understood to have won the first Fremantle to Mandurah yacht race. A 9/02 /1954 pre-race report on the Perth to Bunbury and return event indicates: " Newcomers this year are the 32ft. Bermudian ketch, Melton Lass, and the 32ft. gaff-rigged sloop, Mayflower. Melton Lass was built by Vic Mews at Fremantle, and will be sailed in the race by Murray Church. A later 15/02 1954 report on the race notes the vessel having to retire: " Voyager (A. Bishop), Melton Lass (M. Church) and The Fan (W. West) retired from the race during the afternoon. Voyager retired at 6.30 o'clock and Melton Lass and The Fan two hours earlier. Some of the members of Voyager's crew had become sea sick and could not continue. Melton Lass was too slow to keep in touch with the fleet and The Fan had found the big seas off Rottneest hard going." The yacht had a succession of owners, including Hew Jarman from the Perth Flying Squadron. Jarman featured a black Maltese Cross on SOLACE II's mainsail during the 1950s to 1985, when it was well known on the Swan River. The current configuration remains unchanged from Jarman's time. Fisher Beard the original owner was Hew Jarman's great uncle. The current owner bought SOLACE II in 1992 after it had been cruised extensively in Thailand, Malaysia and Papua New Guinea. From 1998 to 2005 it was gradually restored again retaining the shape and configuration from Hew Jarman's ownership period.

## **Dimensions**

Vessel Dimensions: 9.15 m x 9.15 m x 3.4 m, 8.15 tonnes (30.02 ft x 30.02 ft x 11.16 ft, 8.28 tons)